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THE GOSPEL  
FOR TO-DAY.






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# THE GOSPEL FOR TO-DAY.

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THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES  
IN SCOTLAND,  
IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE  
OF TEN YEARS'  
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.*



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## PREFACE

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IN this volume I have brought together two addresses and four articles, all bearing on a subject, the present importance and interest of which seems to justify their publication. The address on *The Church's Mission and Message* was delivered by me on retiring from the Chairmanship of the Scottish Congregational Union, in Aberdeen, on May 12th, 1903. The address on *The Relation of the Evangelical Basis of our Church Life to Social Questions* was given at the Joint-Meetings of the English, Welsh, Irish and Scotch Congregational Unions in Glasgow, on September 25th, 1902. The four articles on *The Gospel for*

*To-day* appeared in *The Evangelical Magazine* in March, May, June, and August, 1903. It is in the hope that their publication in the present form may give greater permanence and wider diffusion to the plea for the Gospel which they contain, that I have somewhat reluctantly yielded to the suggestion of friends in sending forth this book.

ALFRED E. GARVIE.

LONDON, 10th March, 1904.

# **I. THE CHURCH'S MISSION AND MESSAGE.**

## **I. ITS MISSION.**

### **1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IN THE BIBLE AND THE CREEDS.**

Where Christ is, there is His Church. This is our solid foundation ; and it rests on the strong and firm rock of His own promise. “ Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.” To this Church He intrusted a mission in virtue of His authority and in reliance on His presence. “ All authority hath been given unto Me in

heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” Paul, the chief of the apostles, did not misunderstand this commission when he subordinated the symbolic ordinance to the evangelical proclamation and boldly declared, “Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel.” At the Reformation the Protestant Churches in opposition to the Roman Catholic carefully defined the nature and the functions of the Church. John Knox in the “Scots Confession” in 1560 declares, “The notes of the true Kirk of God, we believe, confess, and avow to be—First, the true preaching of the Word of God, in the which God has revealed Himself to us. Secondly, the right



administration of the Sacraments, which must be annexed to the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts. Lastly, Ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribed, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished." In the "Augsburg Confession" in 1530 Luther and the Saxon Reformers defined the Church to be "the congregation of saints (or general assembly of the faithful), wherein the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered." Article XIX. of the Church of England runs thus: "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's appointment, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." To come nearer to our own time, Ritschl's account of the Church is that it "is recog-

nised as the community of saints by the proclamation of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with their institution, as these are the channels of the distinctively sanctifying activity of God." In all these statements the preaching of the Gospel is not only put first in order, but also in importance; for the Sacraments are significant and valuable only as the symbols and the channels of the truth and grace offered in the Gospel. The Haldanes at the beginning of last century, and James Morison about the middle, preached the Gospel; and it was by their preaching that there came into existence the Churches which, for a half century separated, have now happily and hopefully been brought together in this Union "in the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Whatever these Churches may have lacked in ecclesiastical organisation, they have ever possessed the first note

of the true Church, the preaching of the Word of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## 2. THE CURRENT DEPRECIATION OF PREACHING.

My reason for calling attention to the doctrine of the Church in the New Testament and Protestant theology, and in the practice of those whom we gratefully claim as our spiritual ancestry, is this—there has been in recent times, even in Congregationalism, an inclination to depreciate preaching and to exalt worship or work above it. On the one hand there are those who say, “We do not go to church to hear a man talk, but we go to church to hold communion with God in praise and prayer.” On the other hand there are those who complain that there is too much talking and too little working in our churches, that less doctrine and more practice

are wanted, that "the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." If a sermon is merely a literary essay or an elocutionary display, in which grace or finish of style or charm and force of delivery is the primary consideration, in which the verbal mode is more important than the spiritual matter, then by all means let us have done with preaching altogether. If it is any man's eloquence or talent which is the inducement to church-going, then Christ is as much needed to cleanse our modern sanctuary as He did the temple of old. If those who go to church go to be interested or amused, to condemn or to approve, the sooner the foolish and vain babbling sinks into silence the better for our spiritual sincerity. If the pulpit is to be no more than the substitute or the rival of the press on Sunday, let men read their papers or their novels at their own firesides, and not keep up this hollow mockery. But I do with all

my heart and mind and soul detest and abhor this common view of the preaching of the Word of God. If the preacher is not consciously and voluntarily God's ambassador, if he is not freely giving unto men what he is freely receiving from God by the enlightenment of His Spirit, if he cannot claim humbly and yet confidently to stand in the succession of the prophets and apostles; but if he has taken his office unto himself, if he is merely delivering his own opinions and sentiments, then the pulpit is one of those shams and shows of which we cannot rid ourselves too soon, and which we tolerate only at our soul's peril. For, with such shepherds, what Milton says about the clergy of his own day must prove true:

"The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly and foul contagion spread:  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw  
Daily devours apace, and nothing sed."



However unfaithful the Christian ministry may have been, or even may still be, yet the note of the true Church remains the preaching of the Word of God. That does not mean merely that the text is taken from the Bible, that the phraseology is Scriptural, that the doctrine is orthodox according to the generally-received standards and the sentiments pious according to the conventional pattern; but it means nothing less and else than this—that the preacher is an inspired man because he is experiencing the presence and power of God's Spirit in his reason, conscience, affections, and purposes, that his own "life is hid with Christ in God," that he is in all meekness and lowliness, because of his unworthiness, yet with all boldness and trustfulness, because of God's call and endowment, fulfilling a Divine mission in delivering a Divine message.

### 3. THE RELATION OF WITNESS AND WORSHIP.

The preaching of the Gospel, if thus conceived—and this, I venture to assert, is the only truly and fully Christian conception of the ministry of the Word—must take a foremost place. It is as essential and necessary even as worship; for God's approach to man must come before man's appeal to God. When Tennyson bids the soul,

“Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with  
Spirit can meet—

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands  
and feet.”

we cannot but ask the question, How do we know that He hears, that our voice is not passing into the void? God must first speak to us if we are to speak to Him. As Herrmann in his book “The Communion

of the Christian with God" affirms, "We can speak of an intercourse with God only when we are sure of this, that God speaks to us intelligibly, but also understands our speech, and has regard to it in His operation on us. . . . As God comes inwardly near to us by a proclamation of His love towards us, we turn to God by making known our inner self to Him." God's grace must anticipate our faith; His revelation our religion. It is at least as important that we should know God's will as that God should know our wishes. We do not do God less honour by teachably and obediently waiting to hear what He will speak to us, than by offering Him our praise and prayer. It will often, if not always, be found that those who decry preaching and magnify worship are by no means certain that the Christian Gospel is the Word of God. Intellectual difficulties for such often obscure the glory of the

Divine revelation in Jesus Christ. They do not themselves hear the voice of God when the Christian salvation is proclaimed, but only opinions and beliefs of men, probably erroneous, not certainly true. If God does not speak to them in the sermon from the pulpit, they are quite right in preferring prayer and praise to God. But one may fear for them, that if they do not find any preacher who brings them God's truth, their prayer will fail and their praise grow faint; because the reality of God will become less manifest to them, and the certainty that God hears them will less possess them. Again, it will be generally, if not invariably, observed that where devotion is not dependent on truth the external aids—"the dim, religious light" of the pictured window, the symbolism of the sculptured stone or the carved wood, the suggestion of human costume, posture, and gesture, the stimulus of music and song—become,

and must become, more prominent. But can we doubt that the appeal to the conscience, reason, and affections through the declaration of the truth and grace of God will be more effectual in inspiring true devotion than the excitement of devout feelings through fair sights and sweet sounds? As this depreciation of preaching in many cases arises from Rationalism, so it often leads to Ritualism. Spiritual worship is inspired by the preaching of the Gospel, and needs not any support from any of the devices of Ritualism. Gladly and heartily do I make my own Browning's confession in his "Christmas Eve:"

"I then in ignorance and weakness,  
Taking God's help, have attained to think  
My heart does best to receive in meekness  
That mode of worship, as most to His mind,  
Where earthly aids being cast behind,  
His All in All appears serene  
With the thinnest human veil between."



#### 4. THE RELATION OF WITNESS AND WORK.

This age is more practical than devout; and it is for the sake of action rather than emotion that doctrine is neglected. The mistake is just as great. We cannot do rightly unless we know truly. God's will must be understood to be done. Pious efforts and charitable schemes there may be without the guidance and control of the wisdom of God; but genuinely Christian work there cannot be without the instruction and direction which the preaching of the Word of God alone can give. To the Church are committed "the keys of the Kingdom of God;" and the Church's foundation is "the truth as it is in Jesus." It is not by any instinct or impulse that the practical man can tell the methods and the organs by which God's Kingdom can be

most speedily and surely brought on earth. As the Hebrew people of old before entering on any enterprise for God sought His counsel, so the Church of Christ in these days more than ever needs in all its efforts to inquire what He would have it do. An interesting illustration of the widely-spread sense of our need of guidance, regarding social duty especially, is afforded by a German pamphlet which a short time ago came into my hands. The author, Willy Veit, is the minister of the German Protestant congregation in Manchester; and he seeks to answer the rather startling question, "Do We Need New Revelations?" His argument, briefly, is this: As regards man's relation to God Christ's consciousness cannot be transcended, and there can be no progress beyond His revelation of the Father; but as regards the relations of men to one another, while He offers by His spirit "power and courage, inspiration and

constancy," yet in His teaching it is general principles which He lays down, and not their particular application to present conditions. Accordingly, His Church has a right to expect that it will receive "concrete Divine directions and instructions" in "immediate Divine revelations." While the writer has not convinced me that the Church of Christ has not in the teaching of Jesus on the one hand and the study of social phenomena on the other, with the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, all the means it needs for the discharge of its social task, yet his book shows how important a function of the Christian Church is the preaching in which the principles of Jesus are applied to our immediate necessities. But to return from this digression, it is only the faith that is nourished by the grace of God presented in the Gospel, which can have the confidence and the courage to enter on the heroic and strenu-

ous labours by which alone the cause of Christ in the world can be advanced. It is only the love of Christ presented in the cross that can constrain the loyalty and obedience which His service in the world demands. It is only the wisdom that a study of His revelation inspires, which can afford the insight and foresight to apply wisely and rightly the Church's resources to the necessities of modern society. What should we think of a commander who set out on a campaign without any knowledge of the forces at his command, the nature of the country to be subdued, the purpose of the conflict, or the method of its prosecution? Yet not more foolish would his conduct be than that of those who bid the Church not talk but work, when the talk is counsel, motive, and encouragement in the work. If the Scriptures warn those who are hearers and not doers, they have no beatitude for the man who wants to be

a doer of God's Work but is unwilling to be a hearer of God's Word, in which His Will is made known.

### 5. THE MUTUAL RELATION OF THESE ELEMENTS.

No good reason can be shown for subordinating the preaching of the Gospel either to worship or to work; but it can be conclusively proved that the devout emotions and the practical activities of the Church must be stimulated and sustained, guided and guarded, by the faithful and sincere proclamation of Christian truth. These three elements in the Church's mission—witness, worship, work—must be kept in their proper relation and due proportion. Doctrine which does not inspire devotion is not the living truth of God; for God's approach to man will evoke

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man's appeal to God. Preaching which is not followed by practice is not God's command to the soul; for that will constrain obedience. But, on the other hand, devotion which is not the soul's response to God's revelation will prove an aspiration which finds no satisfaction. Practice which is not informed and directed by the known and acknowledged will of God, will express only human prudence and policy, and not Divine wisdom and righteousness. So, too, the devotion which goes not hand in hand with practice will be hollow, and the practice which is not linked to devotion will be hard. The entire human personality must be addressed, and exercised by the Church in its varied functions; but from this law of the soul's life there is no escape, that it is through the enlightening of the mind that the quickening of the heart and the energising of the will must come. Man's worship of and work for God must wait on

God's witness in the Gospel of His grace through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## 6. THE PROGRESS OF THE CHURCH IN THOUGHT AND LIFE.

For the fulfilment of its mission what is of primary importance for the Church is its *message*, the truth which it receives from God and communicates to men. While "the faith was once for all delivered to the saints," while "every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness," and while "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, yea, and for ever," our apprehension and application of the revelation is imperfect and partial, and therefore progressive. In theory as in practice men

" . . . . rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves to higher things,"

"Through the ages an increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the  
process of the suns."

Yea,

"God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

The Christian Church is not exempt from this law of progress; it must serve its generation in each period of its history by adapting its message not only to the needs and dangers, but even to the doubts and difficulties of the age. The theology of our fathers does not and cannot express most adequately and effectively the Gospel of God's grace for us. Again to quote Browning, the greatest Christian teacher of last century:

"I say that man was made to grow, not stop,  
That help he needed once, and needs no more,  
Having but grown an inch by, is withdrawn;  
For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.  
This imports solely, man should mount on each  
New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,  
The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,  
Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.  
Man apprehends Him newly at each stage."



## II. THE MESSAGE.

### 1. THE PERSONAL INSPIRATION.

If there has been such progress in theology, it will not be unprofitable for us to inquire what for us is the message of God in delivering which the Church will discharge its mission of true witness of God so as to inspire the devout worship of God and the faithful work in His Kingdom. For preaching will not be the power and the wisdom of God unto the salvation of sinners and the perfecting of saints, unless the preacher is himself convinced, and can convince his hearers, that he has a message from God to deliver, that his words are

not of his own invention and imagination, but are by the inspiration of the Almighty, who hath given him understanding clearly to discern and justly to divide the Word of Life. The preacher must be a learner in the school of Christ. He must be trustful, teachable, obedient. He must maintain that communion with God by which alone can be won the vision of God. He must so study the Holy Scriptures as to discover in them the truth, the law, and the promise of God. As he is learning not only for his own help and comfort, but that he may commend the message of God to the conscience and reason of other men, he must be even more on his guard than the believer who is reading for his own edification only, against taking his own opinions, sentiments, and even fancies as the counsel and command of the Most High. A preacher must study his Bible, if he is not to abuse his trust and neglect

his task, by the very best methods available. He ought not to be ignorant of all that modern scholarship has done to make plain the meaning of the Bible. If he is, he is failing to learn all that God is teaching his generation. He must be scholarly not that he may make a parade of his learning, or that he may use it to impose his own authority on others, but that he may know how to gain all that the Scriptures are fitted to give the diligent and sincere student.

## 2. THE GENERAL REVELATION.

But while God speaks to each man, men are so bound to one another by common needs and dangers, doubts and fears, wishes and aims; are so subject to the same mental, moral, spiritual conditions, that for the men of every age there is a

message which has meaning and worth for all. There is a mental environment which modifies the thought of each man; there is a moral climate which helps or hinders the life of each; there is a spiritual atmosphere which sustains or depresses the faith of each. In every age there are general tendencies as there are general necessities. Here and there are individual men who, as it were, incarnate the spirit of the age, and who are thus specially fitted to receive a message from God which has more than individual significance and value, and which, therefore, it will be for the advantage of others to receive from them. As we are all members one of another, and as we suffer or rejoice together, it is not in his own study and sanctuary that each of us receives fully the Divine revelation, but it is in mental intercourse, moral community, and spiritual communion with one another that "the glory of the Lord is re-

vealed and all flesh see it together." We may, therefore, endeavour to discover what is the common revelation for the age which is to be the Church's message to the world. As one who tries to read the signs of the times, may I venture to offer you, not any adequate account of the contents of this message, but a suggestive indication of its characteristics.

## THE MESSAGE EVANGELICAL *(2m)*

### 1. THE NEED OF THE AGE.

First of all, then, this message must be *evangelical*. It is with the Gospel of the grace of God that the Church is charged; and it belongs, therefore, to the permanent essence of Christian theology that it should be evangelical. But it seems to me that the conditions of the age not only make a demand for, but even offer special encourage-

ments to evangelical preaching. The easy and vain optimism of the earlier part of last century is becoming less common, and the note of pessimism is more often touched than it was. "Our time," says Höffding, "seems to be peculiarly the time of pessimism. . . . The great political and social reforms of last century were greeted with expectations of a Golden Age which were not fulfilled." Modern literature has not concealed, but revealed—and often with brutal and shameful frankness, euphemistically called literary realism—the corruptions of man's heart. Modern science, in unfolding its "fairy tale," has so displayed the vastness of the Universe in time and space, the unbroken order and the unchanging law of Nature, that man more than ever feels his own littleness and helplessness. In the contemplation of the starry heavens he does ask the Psalmist's question, "What is man?"—without the cour-

age or confidence of his faith to add, "that God is mindful of him and visiteth him." Modern philosophy, which reflects the tone and temper of literature and science, is less confident than German idealism was that "the real is the rational," that there is "a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness." Modern philanthropy has begun to let its plummet down into, but has not fathomed, the abysmal depths of the social problem. Modern industry has multiplied the material resources of man without thereby ministering to his spiritual satisfaction. Disappointment and discontent, not to say disgust and despair, are common; and the world now needs a message of comfort and courage, help and hope. And only an evangelical theology can offer what the age is calling for like a child in the night, and "with no language but a cry."

## 2. THE NATURE OF EVANGELICALISM.

Let it be understood, however, that the term *evangelical* is not used here as the badge of any sect or the shibboleth of any school. It is not to be restricted by the theory of the atonement or the view of faith which may be held. Every theology is, in my judgment, evangelical which declares what God has done, is doing, and will still do in Christ, through His sacrifice and Spirit, to save men from sin and death and to bless them with the holiness and glory of the eternal life. That man needs redemption from evil, reconciliation to God, and restoration to goodness and happiness; that God has in Jesus Christ met that need fully and freely; that it is the cross of Christ which is "the power and the wisdom of God unto salvation;" that all man needs to do to be saved and blessed in Christ is



to have faith in God's grace; that this faith is so close and living a union with Christ Risen, that as Christ died for our sins so we die unto sin, and as He rose again so we enter into newness of life with Him; that this faith so energises in love to God and man that the believer reckons himself not his own, but Christ's, and serves Christ in His brethren;—this is evangelicalism in the broadest sense of the term. It would be well if differences of doctrine which emerge within evangelicalism were always recognised as of secondary importance, and if this common principle were ever regarded as the primary interest.

### 3. THE COMPETING TENDENCIES—SPECULATIVE, PRACTICAL, MYSTICAL.

This *evangelical* tendency needs to assert itself against three other tendencies in the

Christian thought of the age. There is a *speculative* tendency which is more concerned about the solution of intellectual problems than about the salvation of human souls. Christianity is for it significant and valuable as a philosophical idealism and optimism which through the imagination appeals to the emotions of the multitude, but which the theologian himself must state in terms of pure thought. The common people may be taught that Christ is "the only-begotten and well-beloved Son" of God; the thinker knows that this means that humanity is essentially divine. I do not doubt that Christianity is the supreme truth and good which alone can solve "the riddle of the painful earth;" but that is not its primary, far less its exclusive function. Secondly, there is a *practical* tendency which thinks of Christianity as affording a supreme moral principle in the law of love and a supreme moral example

in the character of its Founder; but this fails adequately to realise that the sufficient moral motive for the fulfilment of the law and the following of the example is found only in the constraint of the love of Christ and His cross—that is, in the evangelical presentation of Christ's life and work. Thirdly, there is a *mystical* tendency which finds the highest good that Christianity offers in communion with God in devout meditation and emotion, yet often ignores the fact that it is only through the forgiveness offered in the Gospel that the sinful soul can enjoy fellowship with God, that it is only by the mediation of Christ that man is united unto God. All these are rival, if not hostile tendencies, to the evangelical; and it can resist and reject them. For a broad and rich evangelicalism can offer men whatever is true and good in them, in addition to the "one thing needful," the grace of God which alone bringeth salvation.

#### 4. THE ESSENCE OF RELIGION— REDEMPTION.

In thus asserting itself the evangelical tendency need not fear the charge of narrowness or backwardness; for it, and not the other tendencies, expresses the essential element in religion. "In the prayer for redemption," says Professor Reischle, "one detects especially clearly the pulse-beat of the religious life." An interesting illustration of this fact is afforded by a book recently published in Germany—Nagel's "The Problem of Redemption"—in which the author traces this element in religious thought and life through the different stages of the various religions. This book "proves," says Reischle, "that characteristic for all religions is the position which the thought of redemption holds in them, and the content which is given to this idea;

in it there is reflected the essence of the religion itself." Even in what may be described as religions of the law, such as Zoroastrianism, Later Judaism, and Mohammedanism, "a significant Divine act of redemption is seen in this, that God has by His law opened to us the way of life." But above all other religions stand the three religions of redemption—Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Christianity—which are distinguished by "the belief that in religion all depends ultimately on the redemption of the soul of man out of the condition in which it now languishes." Of these three alone Christianity "announces this redemption, not only as a distant, intangible ideal, but as a reality which embraces us." In all missionary enterprise it is the Gospel of redemption which is preached, and belief in which satisfies the aspirations of men as the other religions have failed to do. Within Christendom

this Gospel cannot be superseded, but must still remain the Church's message.

## THE MESSAGE EXPERIMENTAL.

### I. THE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY.

Secondly, this message must be *experimental*. It must express and appeal to experience. In no other department of theological thought is the change of recent years so manifest as in Apologetics on the question of the evidences of Christianity. A short time ago Professor Stalker, in his Inaugural Lecture in the United Free Church College of Aberdeen, offered an interesting and important discussion of the subject, "The Basis of Christian Certainty;" to which it serves my present purpose to call special attention. He justifies his choice of subject by the statement: "The ground of certainty in religion is a

subject which has of late received very close attention from the thinking minds of Europe." He mentions in order three foundations on which Christian theology has tried to build. "The old answer of Protestantism," he says, "was that the Bible is the impregnable rock; we are certain of what we believe in religion because it stands written in the Word of God." While he admits that recent critical inquiry has by its results for very many shaken this foundation, yet he maintains that the worth of the Bible may be proved by appeal to Christian experience. "The better and holier people become," he says, "the more do they love the Bible; and the more they love it, the better and holier do they become." He states that a "second ground on which religious certainty has been based is the authority of past ages. What has been believed always, everywhere, and by all, must be true. It is astonishing how

many Christians have been content with this as the foundation of their faith." While rejecting the extreme Roman Catholic application of this principle, he here again appeals to Christian experience. "There is a legitimate sanction," he says, "which the truth derives from the fact that many centuries have believed in it and lived upon it." The third ground of Christian certainty which he mentions is Christian experience; and this he regards as of primary importance. "This personal and immediate contact," he says, "with the spiritual world itself, and not merely with an authoritative record, is both the secret of religion and the soul of theology." But he denies that "this certainty begotten of personal experience" is "independent of every other authority whatsoever;" and insists that "the truthfulness of the Gospel history" must be proved if faith is not to be deprived of its object. With this quali-



fication, however, he recognises the worth of personal experience, even in confirming the authority of the Bible and the Church. "The certainty of personal experience," he says, "lends the strongest support both to the authority of the Church, which one has to acknowledge as the birthplace of one's spiritual life, and to the authority of the Bible, the original witness to the existence of those forces which have made one what one is." But we may ask if, as he himself states the position, he should assume three distinct bases of certainty? For, according to his own admission, (the <sup>modern</sup> ~~new~~ proof of the truth of the Bible is its worth for and in Christian experience, and the <sup>modern</sup> ~~new~~ argument for the value of the thought of past ages is that it has expressed and ministered to Christian experience. The Bible itself is a record and interpretation of man's experience of God; and Church dogma is an attempt to formulate in terms

of thought what has seemed essential for man's experience in God's revelation. The experience of prophets, apostles, even of Christ Himself, of Fathers and Reformers of the Church, must be verified and vitalised in the soul's experience of God's grace. All Christian doctrine, therefore, is experimental in its basis.

## 2. THE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST AND CONSCIENCE.

Even although I believe it could be conclusively shown that the authority of the Bible and the Church rests on experience, yet there is no need of pressing this argument, as there is little doubt that in the present intellectual situation there is no preaching which will meet the needs of men as that which is born of and begets experience. Whatever defects the Ritsch-

lian theology may have, it is at least timely, adapted to the age. One of its representatives, Herrmann, states the argument for the truth of Christianity in these words: "There are *two objective bases* on which the Christian consciousness of communion with God rests. *First, the historical fact of the Person of Jesus.* This fact is a part of our own reality. *Secondly, the fact that the moral demand lays claim to ourselves.* Christ brings it about that the Good ceases to be a grievous problem for us and begins to be the element in which we live. Other objective bases there are not for the truth of the Christian religion." To make clear his meaning, his position may be stated thus. Conscience reveals to us both our moral obligation and our moral impotence. Jesus Christ by His salvation enables us to fulfil our moral obligation by delivering us from our moral impotence. It is in personal experience we realise our need and

His grace. This is not the only form in which the argument may be stated. Kaf-tan, for instance, argues that Christianity is true because man's desire for a highest good is met in the Kingdom of God which it offers. There is fundamental agreement on the point that the truth of Christianity is proved by its worth for experience in that it makes sinful mortal men holy and blessed in Christ.

### 3. THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION.

To state the position more simply and practically, our message must be one the value of which we ourselves in our own lives have proved, and which can in like manner be tested by those who hear us. A preacher should be able to say, God through my faith in the Gospel of His grace has made me a better and happier

man, has saved and blessed me; and if you here will also believe, He will make you better and happier, He will save and bless you. What is wanting in a good deal of preaching is ~~this~~ personal certainty and urgency. Men preach a salvation the full value of which they have not themselves experimentally realised, and yet expect that they will persuade others of its supreme importance for them. They declare what the Bible and the Church teach about the cross of Christ, but they do not bear their own testimony to what the Crucified has done for them in transporting them out of the shadow of death into God's marvellous light. I have often thought that the Christian life of many ministers has been too easy. Born and bred, taught and trained in a Christian home, they have gently and slowly grown in the knowledge and the grace of Christ, and have endured no terrible moral conflicts nor passed

through any severe spiritual crises; consequently there is a wide range of the Christian salvation beyond their own experience. Only by greater intensity in their Christian living, and wider sympathy with other lives more sternly tested, can they transcend this disadvantageous limitation. For surely only he who has himself realised that the only help and hope of men perishing is in the cross of Christ, can preach with such force and fervour as to arouse others to their danger and need, and to call forth their faith in Him who "is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him." To be genuinely evangelical our message must be intensely experimental.

THE MESSAGE ETHICAL.

## I. THE INWARD IMPULSE TO THE ETHICAL.

Thirdly, our message must be *ethical*. We must be able to show that belief in the Gospel not only makes men happy, but that it also makes them good. It is certain—and let us thank God for it—that this age will have nothing to do with a Gospel which in the slightest degree encourages men to “continue in sin that grace may abound,” and that it will show respect to a Gospel which can prove a greater power making for righteousness than any other form of religious teaching. The Moderates of a previous century in Scotland were blamed for preaching morality. That need not have been any reproach to them. And if the Evangelicals in any degree neglected to preach morality, theirs was the shame.

What one could find fault with in the Moderates was that the morality they preached was not large and lofty enough. Had it been, they would have been compelled to preach as well as morality the only adequate motive and sufficient power for holy living, the grace of God in Jesus Christ. In being ethical an evangelical and experimental theology makes no new departure and introduces no inconsistent innovation. The only salvation for man that is worth preaching is a deliverance from the bondage of evil and an endowment of freedom to do right and be good. The only proof which a man has any right to be content with himself, and to offer for the satisfaction of others that he is saved, is that he is a better man than he was, that he now hates the sin he loved before, and that he is now devoted to the cause of truth and righteousness, to which he was before indifferent. It is not in the thoughts and



feelings, but in the actions, that the religious life shows most decisively its sickness or health, its weakness or strength. A sentence from Professor Bois' French work on "The Religious Sentiment" is in this connection worth quoting. "From all sides stands out this great psychological law, that the will, with its rational rule, called duty, is indispensable for the foundation and maintenance of religious health; that the Christian ought to know how to guard himself from taking pleasure, even religious pleasure, for his direct end or his criterion; and that it is only by the will and action determined by duty that he will be able to acquire and conserve a normal and complete religious life, in which all parts of his nature shall dwell together, harmoniously combined and established, and in which he will give himself entirely to his God and his brethren, only to find his gift returned to him in benefit." De-

voted though I am to evangelicalism, yet I must confess that the older evangelicalism was sometimes not so distinctly and intensely ethical as it ought to have been; and I must insist that the newer evangelicalism, if it is to discharge its function in the thought and life of the age, must become out-and-out and through-and-through and all-round ethical. As the Rev. W. L. Walker, late minister of Laurence-kirk Congregational Church, has shown most seasonably and properly, even in the title, and not only in the contents of his second book, "The Cross and the Kingdom," the cross is not an end in itself, but a means towards the Kingdom. Christ died for us not simply that we might be saved from death, but that in Him we might die unto sin and rise again to live in holiness unto God. It is a stunted, a mutilated Gospel which does not demand and stimulate a morality larger and loftier

than any that the mere moralist has ever conceived. Calvary's ideal is greater and grander than Sinai's law.

## 2. THE OUTWARD DEMAND FOR THE ETHICAL.

If there is this inward impulse in evangelical and experimental theology to be also ethical, it is met with as strong an outward demand. Modern society more than anything else needs moral guidance, enforced by a religious sanction. Huxley in his "Romanes Lectures" confessed that the cosmical process, as interpreted by science, does not yield the regulative principles for man's ethical progress. Comte in the invention of the Religion of Humanity recognised that science, with all its discoveries and applications, is not sufficient for the things of the spirit of man.

Moral development has not kept step with material, and even intellectual progress; and that progress itself has raised many problems. The direction in truth and righteousness which modern literature is giving, is an almost negligible quantity. In politics we do not find any elevated and generous ideals moulding men and making measures. There is in some quarters abounding social enthusiasm; but in it there is often more heat than light. The sentiment of patriotism is more prone to sink to a superstition than to soar to an inspiration of duty. Not individual virtue needs to be taught only, but also social obligation and national responsibility. The British Empire presents many moral problems which can be solved only by the courageous and consistent application of Christian principles. How are the savage races or the peoples inferior in civilisation and culture now within its borders to be

protected against becoming the victims of the greed, lust, and cruelty of those who claim to be their superiors in enlightenment and advancement; and how are they with least peril and injury to be lifted up to gentler manners and purer morals? How can the suspicion, jealousy, and rivalry of the competing races be transformed into goodwill and helpfulness? How can the wealth and strength of the Empire serve only for its defence, and never appear a danger and defiance to other nations? How can the antagonism of Capital and Labour, the separation of the classes and the masses, the corruption of the rich by luxury and indulgence, and the degradation of the poor by hardship and misery, be prevented? How can intemperance be ended and the power of the liquor traffic be broken? How can the gambling spirit be exorcised, not only from our sports, but also from our financial oper-

ations? How can integrity and honesty be made universal in all business? How can home be cleansed and brightened, womanhood and childhood be guarded from neglect and cruelty, love be made supreme in all family relationships? These are all urgent moral problems on the adequate solution of which the existence and continuance, the prosperity and glory of this Empire depend. I know no other agency so bound by its Divine vocation and so fitted by its Divine resources for the discharge of this task as is the Christian Church. But has it now the ability and the courage to attempt this heroic and strenuous enterprise? I am afraid that too many ministers are still afraid of being called radical, socialistic, secular, and so fail frankly and bravely to apply the laws of Christ to our common life in the world. I often feel that there is something parochial, trivial, superficial, in our policy and

methods, and that we need a clearer vision and a wider prospect to discover the countless opportunities and therefore measureless obligations of the Church of Christ to instruct and inspire, to purify and perfect the whole world by its message, evangelical, experimental, and ethical, in the fulfilment of its mission as the steward intrusted with the keys of the Kingdom of God—that “far-off divine event, to which the whole creation moves.”

## II. THE GOSPEL FOR TO-DAY.

### (I.) THE PRESENT DANGER AND NEED.

#### I. THE INCREASE OF NON-ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH.

No careful and interested student of the religious thought and life of the present day can have escaped observing that in regard to more distinctively evangelical preaching there is on the part of not a few cultured and thoughtful ministers a disinclination to engage in it, and on the part of a great many intelligent men and women of all classes an aversion to giving it any attention. It is a common complaint that the Churches are being deserted by the working classes; and although this, as



all such sweeping statements, must be accepted with considerable modifications, yet it cannot be denied that non-attendance at church is becoming more common among respectable artisans. But this religious indifference is found among the rich as well as the poor. The habit of church-going as a badge of respectability is kept up in the suburbs of our large cities as it is not in the slums; and nevertheless the lapsed classes in the west-end are increasing even as the lapsed masses in the east-end. Confining our attention meanwhile to the working classes, it is to be observed that home missionary work does not affect the non-church-going to any appreciable extent; many meetings are attended mainly by old women and young children. Even the popular evangelist does not draw the mass of workmen, unless his eccentricities are such as to excite curiosity. The Adult Schools, the Pleasant Sunday Afternoons,

and the College Settlements movements have been more successful in reaching working men; but these do not rely exclusively on the preaching of the Gospel as the means of attraction. Very many reasons may be given for this state of matters. Absorbing interest in sports of all kinds is necessarily accompanied by growing indifference to religion. The vices of drunkenness and gambling inevitably produce an aversion to all higher pursuits. The monotony of many kinds of labour exhausts the energies without developing the capacities, and produces a desire for excitement which seeks satisfaction in unhealthy amusements. The struggle for existence which results from the keen competition that is at present characteristic of commerce and industry, so strains the powers of many, and makes their outlook on life so hopeless, that living itself becomes a burden, and all higher aspirations

are allowed to die. The rapid changes which our modern methods of production and distribution involve, lead to one serious evil, the movement of the population from one place to another, and the consequent loosening of the social bonds. Frequent change of church connection often ends in its total lapse. Among the well-to-do and wealthy classes the desire for and the delight in Mammon expel the love of God. The frivolities of society are found more interesting than the sanctities of the church. Comfort and luxury produce religious insensibility.

## 2. THE ANTAGONISM TO EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE.

For my present purpose a fuller analysis of this phenomenon of religious indifference, with its consequence in neglect of

public worship, is not necessary, as I wish to confine attention to one phase of it and the reason which may be given for this phase. There can be no doubt that there is among many men and women of intelligence, not only indifference to religion generally, but especially hostility to evangelical doctrine as presented in the traditional orthodoxy. It is the Gospel which is the stone of stumbling for many minds. Among well-read and thoughtful persons of all classes there is just enough knowledge of the changes through which modern thought has passed, and of the necessary consequences of these changes for the presentation of Christian truth, to make them suspicious of all preaching which ignores these. Many working men especially have convinced themselves (on insufficient grounds, be it acknowledged) that the Gospel is not true, and that the ministers who preach it do not believe it themselves, but,

as their profession demands, keep up the pretence of believing it. Hence the contempt of many an artisan for the parson. To do some of the persons estranged from the Church full justice, it must be recognised that they have made social reform their religion; and sanitation, education, arbitration, co-operation, claim of them as much service and devotion as few members of the Christian Church give to its interests and efforts. The apparent indifference of the Church to the social problem is the cause of at least some of the hostility that such persons feel towards it. If these are to be won back they must be met on their own ground, and the Gospel must be presented to them as a message of social redemption as well as individual salvation. For very many who are now outside of the Church what is necessary is an amelioration of their condition as well as an improvement of their character; and these two

changes are in a large measure mutually dependent. A social campaign against the evils, and a moral crusade against the sins of our age, must partly prepare the way for, and partly go along with the religious conquest of the people by the Church. While there are many means which must be employed in this warfare, yet one which cannot be neglected is such preaching of the Gospel as will take due account of all the intellectual influences which are being exerted on the minds of men, and will sympathetically recognise the social aspirations that are being stirred in many hearts. If we now turn from the hearers to the preachers of the Gospel, we shall find that there are some who are hindered in the free and full exercise of all their powers in the ministry by doubts and difficulties about evangelical doctrines, the removal of which would be their emancipation to greater and wider service than in their present mental state is possible to them.

### 3. THE THEOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES OF EVANGELICALISM.

It must be admitted that there are Christian preachers in whose message the cross has not the prominence which it has in the New Testament. They do not deny, they may never even have doubted the evangelical doctrines, but as a rule they avoid dealing with the Christian salvation by the sacrifice of Christ. The Fatherhood of God and the duties of the Christian life are their favourite themes. The moral, social, and even political teaching of the Hebrew prophets affords them a welcome escape from "the solemn shadow of the cross." There is a complaint which some narrow Christian men and women bring against their minister, that he is not evangelical, because he does not use the conventional phrases of a

popular revivalism, with which one can have no sympathy whatever; but it is not always prejudice which makes some sincere and earnest hearers of the Word long for the clearer and fuller sound of the Gospel from the pulpit. Can we discover the reason for this attitude in the ministry? A theological change affords part of the explanation. It is simply impossible for the most of us to think about God as the traditional orthodoxy for a long time did. We cannot believe that unbaptised infants are damned, as even the author of "Rock of Ages" is said to have done. We cannot believe that all the heathen who die without hearing and believing the Gospel, suffer eternally in hell, as I once heard an aged missionary maintain as an urgent reason for sending out the preachers of the cross to all the ends of the earth. We cannot believe that there is a time or a place in which God "forgets to be gra-



cious," as I have repeatedly heard vehemently asserted by open-air preachers at street-corners. The belief in God's Fatherhood has become the fixed centre of modern theology. One does feel indignant when evangelicalism is regarded as responsible for the crude and coarse representations of the atonement of which ignorant and vulgar men are guilty; but it must be admitted that evangelical doctrines have not infrequently been presented in an offensive and even repulsive form. There are evangelical preachers who think they are magnifying the grace of Christ when they are simply obscuring the love of God. Let one instance suffice. I have heard a fervent evangelist picture the scene in heaven when a prayer for pardon arrives there. The Father is unwilling to grant the boon; the Son rises from His throne, casts aside the robe of glory, and bares His wounded side; and when the Father sees the blood, He

yields. It is not often, happily, that the representation is quite so gross; but once and again have I been made to shudder at the irreverent way in which men have spoken and sung about the blood of Christ. The severest criticism and the sternest condemnation of such profane and vile caricatures of the Gospel of the grace of God, should come from those who are the most urgent in their desire to see all preaching intensely and distinctively evangelical; for there can be no doubt that evangelicalism itself has suffered from its association in many minds with such travesties of Christian truth. The revolt against a popular evangelicalism which one finds among some learned and refined ministers, is due to loyalty to the idea of God which Christ Himself has given us. It is true that those who are thus estranged from evangelicalism are not altogether blameless. A little more patience and sympathy with minds less dis-

ciplined than their own, a little more tolerance for opinions and sentiments unlike their own, a little more desire to discover what it is that gives even the least attractive revivalism the power that it undoubtedly possesses, would have led them at least to inquire whether there may not be a doctrine of the cross entirely harmonious with the Divine Fatherhood.

#### 4. THE INFLUENCE OF THE HIGHER CRITICISM ON EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY.

A second reason for this attitude towards evangelicalism is afforded by the influence of the higher criticism. Without unreservedly accepting all the conclusions put forward by higher critics, I may frankly express my conviction that ultimately this movement will prove a great gain to Christian faith, and that already the Bible has

gained new meaning and fresh worth as the varied literature of a progressive historical revelation having its centre in the person of Christ. At present, however, literary criticism has in many minds produced doctrinal uncertainty. Had belief in the absolute authority and inerrancy of the Scriptures remained unshaken by these discussions, many would have held evangelical doctrine on the testimony of the New Testament, even if they could not make it intelligible to their own minds. It is now generally held that the story of the Fall is not to be taken as literal history. But how prominent a position is assigned to this narrative in the traditional orthodoxy! If that must be given up, can anything else of this theological scheme be held fast? That is the question which not a few seem to be in undue haste to answer. If Paul's personal experience was peculiar, and if he interpreted it in his theology by modes of

thought which are now antiquated, must his claim to rule our views about the cross be left unchallenged? That is the doubt that disturbs some minds. If it be admitted that there is a temporary and local form as well as a permanent and universal content in the teaching of the New Testament, may not much which evangelicalism has hitherto regarded as essential be accidental for Christian faith, may not even the doctrine of the death of Christ as a propitiation be a survival of Pharisaic Judaism, and have no vital function in the spiritual organism of Christianity? That is a problem which the experience of some Christian thinkers would lead them to solve in another sense than evangelicalism has done. In this condition of theological uncertainty what most men accept or reject of the teaching of the Bible as necessary to their faith, depends in large measure on their personal experience.

### 5. THE LIMITATIONS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Hence a third reason for the estrangement from evangelicalism of some ministers even may be found in their inward history. There are many genuine and devoted Christians, who have been born and bred in Christian homes, who have been taught and trained in Christian truth and grace, who have gained Christian faith and life by a gradual moral and religious growth, who have never passed through a spiritual crisis or known a decisive moral change, who have no memory of a translation from the shadow of death into God's marvellous light, who cannot in their own consciousness contrast the misery of life without Christ and the blessedness of life in Him, for He has ever been with them. Of the

reality and even the possibility of such an experience evangelicalism has often been doubtful and suspicious. Some ardent evangelicals have been prone to require that all Christian experience should be of one type, to deny the salvation of those who could not profess a definite conversion, to ignore the value of a Christian heredity, environment, and education in securing an apparently simultaneous development for the natural and supernatural life. Not a little harm has been done in dealing with children and young men and women, by leading them to expect and even forcing them to imitate an experience which their moral and spiritual condition was not adapted for; whereas the right and wise course, where the circumstances are favourable to Christian life and growth, is gently and kindly to foster these, instead of trying violently to bring about a sudden change. As one whose own experience has been of

the kind described, I need not pause to prove that I admit its legitimacy, nay that I go further and hold that it is desirable that this type of Christian life should become more common; but that it has its defects and disadvantages, unless corrected by an extensive and intense sympathy with all other types, I fully and freely recognise. There is not a little in distinctively evangelical doctrine which it is more difficult for one whose experience has been of this kind to apprehend and appreciate, than it is for one who has been down in the darkest and dreariest depths of remorse and has been consciously exalted by God's saving grace to the brightest and most blessed heights of reconciliation. This difficulty, unrecognised, and therefore unremoved, explains, it seems to me, the inability of some Christian ministers to understand and fully sympathise with evangelicalism. This defect is not inevitable. If a man lives the Chris-



tian life strenuously and intensely enough, he will so realise his own need, and the sufficiency of God's grace in Christ and His cross, that he will be able to understand and sympathise with the experience of a Paul, an Augustine, a Luther, and a Wesley, and so will find himself in the evangelical succession of faith and life, for which Christ Crucified is the power and wisdom of God unto salvation.

## 6. THE CONTINUED NEED OF THE GOSPEL.

This indifference to, if not suspicion of evangelical doctrine, which is to be met with among many who do not go to church, and even among some Christian preachers, compels us to face the question, Do we still need to Gospel, at least as evangelicalism has hitherto understood and witnessed for it? I have heard it gravely maintained

that to conceive of Christ's death as a sacrifice is to perpetuate Jewish and even pagan views of God in the Christian Church, that the Pauline conception of the righteousness of God is intelligible and credible only from a Pharisaic standpoint, that the sense of guilt and the dread of punishment are to be regarded as morbid psychic phenomena, that for those who are sunk in the sin and shame of barbarism and heathenism, and even for the moral wrecks and social outcasts of our civilised society, the message of the cross, with its assurance of forgiveness and its promise of deliverance, may be still necessary, but that those who from their earliest years have learned to know and trust God as their Father, and to walk by His help in His holy ways, do not need any way of reconciliation. Some who do admit the need of a Gospel have a short and easy method of finding out what it is. Without expressly denying the

worth of the rest of the New Testament, they regard *the Sermon on the Mount* as the Christian ethical code, and *the Parable of the Prodigal Son* as the Christian theological creed. Their Gospel may be put in a few words. If sinners are sorry for their sins, God forgives them, and in thankfulness to Him and by His aid they enter on the good and godly life which leads to heaven. This sublimated essence of the Gospel is produced by excluding a great deal in the Gospels, not only in Jesus' teaching, but most of all in His experience. Why did Jesus die, and die in such agony and desolation of spirit? To this question we find here no answer. How much of Paul's theology must be superfluous speculation if this is an adequate account of the Christian salvation! The apostles must have blundered and led others astray when they preached Christ Crucified. Criticism may, with a boldness

and rashness which are in no way admirable, try to get rid of all Jesus' sayings about His death, but it has not yet had the audacity to ask us to believe that Jesus did not die as the Gospels represent. Whether He spoke about His death before He suffered or not—although I see no good grounds for challenging the authenticity of these sayings, a valuable discussion of which may be found in Walker's "The Cross and the Kingdom"—if He died as the Gospels testify, what claims to be a Gospel must give us a more adequate interpretation of His Passion than this "advanced theology" has hitherto offered. Paul's originality of experience and doctrine may be lauded in order to discredit his dependence on Jesus, and consequently his authority for Christian faith; but it will require more plausible arguments than I have ever met with to persuade me that he had not, as he himself believed, the

mind of Christ in regard to His cross. But, besides, it is beyond doubt or question that in Christian experience, past and present, the cross as interpreted by evangelicalism has produced in men a conviction of their sinfulness, has conveyed to them an assurance of their forgiveness, has inspired in them a devotion to Christ, and therefore a loyalty to God and goodness, such as no other presentation of truth has been found capable of doing. Wherever Christ Crucified is preached He is still mighty to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. There are still sin and shame, sorrow and suffering, darkness and desolation, death and despair in the world, for which succour and comfort are to be found only in the cross. The records of foreign missions are daily affording us evidence that there is in all men a voice of faith which responds to the tender and helpful appeal of Calvary. It is simply

incredible that the message of salvation in Christ, to which prophets and apostles, martyrs and saints bear witness, should be ever superseded. Mankind still needs pardon of sin, peace with God, power of holiness, and promise of heaven; and as hitherto these gifts have come only through faith in God's grace in Christ, so henceforth we cannot doubt that Christ Crucified and Risen will always be the help and hope of a sinful and dying world. Only one who has had little experience of the sadder and sterner phases of human life, can entertain the fond fancy that the world can now do without the cross, God's sacrifice and man's salvation. Even the man who has grown into the Christian life without the personal experience of the darkness and terror of sin and guilt from which the cross of Christ saves, is what he is only because Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. His knowledge of and trust in

God, his sense of forgiveness and his longing for holiness, his deliverance from the dread of death and his assurance of the blessedness of heaven, all the gifts of grace which he uses and enjoys, have come to him through Christian instruction and influence, which owe their distinctive character and potent efficiency to the Christian history, in which God in Christ is reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing unto men their iniquity. Evangelical doctrine alone adequately interprets even the factors which have formed the experience of the Christian man, in so far as he is genuinely Christian, who is through misunderstanding estranged from evangelicalism. Let the soul of such a man come into the deep waters of experience, when the floods of doubt and fear, failure and disappointment overwhelm him, and it is not unlikely that he will find deliverance only by becoming conscious as he was not before

that it is by His sacrifice alone that Christ brings to men salvation, that it is only in the Rock of Ages, cleft for them, that men can hide themselves from the tempest and the terror of life and death.

#### 7. THE CALL FOR A RESTATEMENT OF THE GOSPEL.

If, then, the Gospel is still needed, and if the Gospel as stated in the traditional orthodoxy seems to many unintelligible and incredible, the question must be dealt with: Can we attempt a restatement of the Gospel in such modern terms as will be understood and welcomed by men who read and think? Some of the leaders in Christian Churches seem to be more anxious to leave the uninformed and unreflective faith of the many undisturbed, than to meet the doubts and difficulties of those who have the will



to believe, but cannot see how they can accept the Gospel as true and yet remain loyal to all the truth which they have learned. Some preachers appear to gain a cheap popularity by playing to the gallery, by ostentatiously professing their faith in "the simple old Gospel" and "the grand old Book," and by offensively deriding the higher criticism as science falsely so-called, and progressive theology as vain philosophy. Like the Pharisees of old, they have their reward. While the Christian preacher or teacher deserves the severest possible condemnation who wantonly injures the spiritual life of his hearers, yet the prejudices of some must not be allowed to hinder his helpfulness to others who in darkness are seeking for light. It does not seem impossible, however, so to present the Gospel that the continuity of faith will be undisturbed while the demands of intelligence are met. It is certain that of all the

tasks set to theology in the present day this is the most important, to make the Gospel the assured possession of the modern mind. There is a great deal of specialism in Biblical language, text, literature, and history, which has its own relative value, but which seems to me, at least, to have exercised far too strong a fascination over the more studious ministers of our day. Many of these questions of scholarship can wait an answer; but this problem of *The Gospel for To-day* must be solved as soon as possible. It is to this subject that theological thought should apply itself persistently, patiently, and courageously. No greater service can be rendered to the life of Christian Churches by any theologian than such a re-statement of the Gospel as all ministers could preach with conviction and all hearers could accept with confidence. Without presuming to offer all that is desired and required, I now venture to indicate some of

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the features of such a restatement as it seems to me the age needs and wishes. My plea for the attention of the reader is this, that I have endeavoured, in my study and in my pulpit, to be both evangelist and theologian, to know and understand the intellectual demands of the age, and to discover and meet the practical necessities of my fellow-men. *The Gospel for To-day* which I am bold enough to offer for consideration, seems to me at least to keep fast hold of the faith once delivered to the saints, and to present it in a form which makes easier its acceptance by thoroughly modern minds.

## (2.) SIN, GUILT, AND DEATH.

### 1. THE RELATION OF EVANGELICALISM TO CRITICISM AND SCIENCE.

It is commonly taken for granted by some "advanced" theologians that the denial of the historical accuracy of the narrative in Genesis iii. has deprived evangelical doctrine of its foundation. It is boldly affirmed that the evangelical view of sin cannot be maintained unless it is represented as having its origin in a fall from a previous state of innocence, that the evangelical conception of guilt necessarily involves that the individual sinner is condemned as a partner in Adam's transgression, that the evangelical description of death as the wages of sin depends on the proof that death was introduced into the world after

the Fall. It is argued that the story in Genesis iii. must be set aside as a myth, and that the only possible conclusion from what science teaches us is that man's history has been a progress from the animal to the spiritual, and that death is a physical necessity which has no connection with sin. For this misunderstanding evangelical theology is itself not without blame; for there can be no doubt that there is not a little of preaching of the Gospel in which the Fall still fills a large place and plays a great part. There are some evangelical preachers who are either ignorant of or indifferent to the change in modern thought about the Bible due to criticism, and about man's origin due to science. There are others who are neither ignorant nor indifferent, but are vehemently hostile to all new views, as they cannot see any other way of saving the Gospel than by denying the right of criticism and the worth of

science. But it would be nothing less than a grievous disaster were such men allowed to monopolise, as they are inclined somewhat ostentatiously to do, the sacred and glorious epithet of *evangelical*, and consequently were evangelicalism to be identified among cultured and intelligent men with theological reaction and intolerance. Evangelicalism cannot afford to isolate itself from or oppose itself to criticism and science.

## 2. THE FAILURE OF A "MEDIATING" THEOLOGY.

There are some evangelical theologians who attempt what in Germany would be called a mediating theology. The story of the Fall in Genesis iii. is defended as, if not literally, yet figuratively true, and as in this form at least still necessary to the

Gospel. It is said, for instance, that the Fall takes place in every man when for the first time he becomes fully conscious of the moral imperative and freely chooses to disregard and to disobey it. But such a moral crisis cannot be proved to be universal; and man is never, as we know him, absolutely innocent, but always inherits inclinations opposed to the moral law, which emerges into clear consciousness only after the character has already begun to be formed. Or, again, it is insisted that the unity of the race warrants us at least in affirming that the origin of sin may be referred to some moral crisis in the experience of the ancestor of the race. But science affirms so lowly a beginning for the race that we cannot assume its ancestor as capable of experiencing a moral change so momentous as by its consequences to affect the moral condition of all his descendants. Regarding the relation of sin and death it is ex-

plained that, while death was in the world before man, yet if man had risen from innocence without sin to holiness, he would so completely have ascended out of the physical realm into the spiritual that he would have escaped the necessity of death. But this is a speculation of the truth of which there is not a shred of proof in facts, and it is simply due to the desire to save the traditional orthodoxy from openly admitting that it must abandon a position to which it has already too long tenaciously clung. But apart altogether from the objections to these mediating essays, there may be opposed to them a general principle the full and frank acceptance of which must be urgently pressed upon evangelicalism. It is this. The Gospel must be made much simpler than this type of theology makes it. A man should be able to recognise his need of Christ by the use of his own conscience alone, without any assist-



ance whatever from anthropology. A man should be able to realise that he is a sinner, and that sin involves judgment, without being invited to accept any speculative solutions of the problem of the origin of sin and death. A man should be able to accept the conclusions of criticism or science without in any way weakening his faith in Jesus as his Saviour and Lord.

### 3. THE TEACHING OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

But it may be argued that to abandon any of these old positions is a betrayal of the Gospel, for the Holy Scriptures forbid any such divorce between the ruin of the Fall and the recovery of the Cross. If we study the New Testament carefully we shall find that our Lord does not base any of His teaching about sin on the narrative in

Genesis iii. Even Paul's reference to the introduction of sin into the world by the disobedience of Adam, in Romans v. 12-21, is not a foundation, but an ornamentation of his theological structure. This passage might be dropped out of his letter and his doctrine of sin would remain substantially the same. The purpose of the passage is not to account either for sin or for death. Even if it were, his speculations on these questions could not have for us the value that his testimony to what Christ's grace had done for him has, unless we are prepared to subject ourselves to all the intellectual limitations of his age, to which he was necessarily subject, and which the slow mental progress of the race has enabled us to transcend. His purpose is, assuming as true the beliefs of his own times on these questions, to prove that if so much harm could be wrought by one man's sin, much more good could be brought about by one

man's obedience, that Christ's influence on the race must be much greater than Adam's. Without accepting the form of the argument, we can appreciate its substance, that grace is more potent and diffusive than sin; for if we did not believe this we could have no hope for the progress of the race, we must cease to be optimists, and become pessimists. Paul's assurance of Christ's grace did not depend on his belief about Adam's sin; for an event of the remote past cannot serve as evidence for the reality of an experience of the immediate present. He does undoubtedly represent death as the penalty of sin; and it is necessary, therefore, to consider how far we can accept his conception without committing ourselves to the belief in the historical character of the narrative in Genesis iii. Death means for him much more than physical dissolution. The death he thinks of is death as it presents itself in the con-

sciousness of sinners—as the loss of all that makes life worth living, and as the summons to God's judgment to answer for the sins done in the body. For the Christian death as physical dissolution has not been abolished, but death as Paul understands it has. It is the moral and spiritual accompaniments of death which engage his attention when he speaks of it as penalty; and we may accept his view that sin does invest death with dread and darkness, while we cannot hold with him that even as physical dissolution death is due to sin.

#### 4. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY.

We must so lay the foundations of our evangelical theology that the dictates of conscience will in no way be contradicted by the doubts or difficulties of reason. To

commend Christ to the soul the appeal must be only to what is indubitably certain to it. There may be speculations more or less plausible about the origin of sin and death, but these should never be intruded in preaching the Gospel, the aim of which must always and only be to make plain the way of salvation. A man need not be asked to believe in the origin of sin with Adam; he must be made to discover and confess the existence of sin in himself. It may even be suggested that the traditional orthodoxy, in assigning such decisive significance to the transgression of Adam, ran the risk of weakening the sense of individual responsibility in his descendants. What is needful, now as ever, is to bring men to such a consciousness of their sinfulness that they will condemn themselves. But it may be said that it is just this sense of individual responsibility which is most in conflict with some intellectual tendencies

of the age. If morality is regarded from the standpoint of physical science, nothing seems a greater illusion than just this consciousness of personal freedom. There can be no doubt whatever that heredity and environment are most potent factors in the formation of character; and in judging any man due allowance must be made for the inclinations the past has given him and the influences the present is exercising upon him. Yet the inward testimony to the freedom of the will is so distinct and certain, that only in very exceptional cases can a man be acquitted of blame for what he is, or will it be found impossible to bring home to him his own fault and failure. The Materialism which denies freedom is irreconcilable with evangelical doctrine, but it is just as irreconcilable with reason and conscience, morality and religion. All the ideals which illumine and elevate human life stand or fall with this fact of personal

liberty. Granted that a man is willing to give heed to the witness in his own conscience to his own freedom, it will be possible to make him realise his sinfulness, to make him know and feel that he is not what he ought to be, not even what he might have been. That he has inherited evil inclinations, that he is environed by evil influences, instead of weakening this sense of individual responsibility should strengthen it; for as it should on the one hand make him feel how much greater is the resistance which in these he has to overcome, so it should on the other hand make clear to him how much more is involved in his every act, as its moral defect may be perpetuated by heredity or diffused by his environment. Because a man's liberty is limited by his heredity and environment, and yet the effects of his use of it may be transmitted by heredity and conveyed by environment, it must appear to him a severer trial and a greater task.

### 5. THE STIMULATION OF CONSCIENCE.

But how is this sense of sinfulness to be made more intense and vigorous, how can conscience be stimulated, how can the painful, though healthful self-discovery of the soul be brought about? There is no use in asking a man to compare himself with the imaginary standard of a natural innocence; for he may be asked to regard the actual example of personal perfection in Jesus Christ. Christ does not supersede conscience, as it is conscience which recognises and approves His perfection; but He does reveal the moral ideal as a reality, and thus He both elevates the standard and confirms the authority of conscience. Hence to preach Christ in His grace and glory is to convince men of their failure more effectually than could be done in any other way. His truth, His love, His holiness,



cannot but inspire, not admiration only, but even adoration; and adoration of what He is cannot but evoke aspiration to be like Him. There are some who can be convicted of heinous offences against the moral law; there are others, of outwardly blameless life, who can be made to recognise their moral defect only by being brought to measure themselves by this moral ideal of a personal perfection, which transcends the moral law. Evangelicalism, that it may thus secure the sense of sinfulness, to which the Gospel may make its appeal, needs to become more sensitive morally to the beauty and sublimity of the character of Jesus. It is no injustice to affirm that what claims to be distinctively evangelical preaching is too often lacking in moral culture and refinement. Yet only in the measure in which evangelicalism can so depict Christ as to make Him vividly and potently present to the imagination and the

affection of men, will it bring to them the conviction of sin which will need no doubtful account of the origin of sin in Adam's fall to explain and confirm it. There is one aspect of the work of Christ especially which can be so presented as to arouse conscience and lead to repentance. The agony and desolation of the Son of God upon the cross declare the heinousness and hatefulness of sin as all the crimes and calamities of human history do not. It is at the cross that sin is finally judged as well as fully forgiven. Again and again has it been proved in Christian experience that it is only in the contemplation of sin's remedy that the sense of sin's disease has been fully developed. To preach not only Christ, but Christ Crucified, is to convict the world of its unrighteousness. To produce this moral effect the cross must be interpreted in its full moral significance. But what this is must be reserved for treatment at a subsequent stage of this discussion.

## 6. THE REALITY OF GUILT AND PUNISHMENT.

While it is of utmost importance for evangelicalism that there should be awakened the sense of sin, so that it will be hated, loathed, and abandoned, yet, as recognising the facts of life, it cannot ignore the sense of guilt and the fear of punishment that are found in many men. The sinner knows himself guilty, that is, liable to punishment. He may at first dread the punishment more than he hates the sin. This is not a satisfactory moral condition; but progress can be secured, not by ignoring or merely condemning it, but by recognising whatever correspondence with reality this consciousness displays. While a man must be taught to think as seriously and to feel as keenly about his sin as about its penalty, yet that there is punishment needs

to be brought home to the souls of men, that they may gain the sense of guilt and acknowledge the fact of sin. To many modern minds the representations of guilt and punishment in the traditional orthodoxy seem very inadequate; for they are too forensic—a formal sentence in a Divine court to future punishment, which by timely repentance can be escaped. In giving a more adequate representation evangelicalism will do well to learn from psychology, and even biology. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” These words express, as do many of Paul’s statements of marvellous insight and foresight, a thoroughly modern conception, that there is law in the spiritual as in the natural world, although not the same laws. Biological language may, however, be very appropriately employed in describing moral and spiritual conditions. Every variation in an organism results in its greater or less

adaptation to its environment, in increasing or decreasing its fitness for survival. The voluntary variation called sin has its own inevitable consequences; it puts the man who commits it out of adaptation with his moral and spiritual environment—especially God, the home of souls. The sense of guilt is the sense of maladaptation. But this is not the only result, but itself is indicative of further results. As in an organism maladaptation to environment disturbs its functions, decreases its vigour, and tends to destroy its vitality, so the man who has by sin become estranged from God suffers moral decay and at last spiritual death. There is no escape from these fatal consequences of sin unless the harmony of God and the soul is restored, as is done by man's penitence and God's pardon; and then gradually but certainly the process of deterioration is arrested and a process of development substituted. Thus guilt and

punishment may be presented as present realities of supreme significance for each man.

#### 7. THE CONTINUITY OF THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

But this insistence on the present penalty of sin in its immediate moral and spiritual consequences, must not exclude a reference to future punishment. We have no evidence whatever that physical death can or does work any moral or spiritual change. The probability is that it does not, as moral and spiritual effects cannot arise from physical causes, and the effects of sin cannot be counteracted by any other than moral and spiritual means. It is practically certain, then, that he that is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is holy will be holy still. Even here and now we can observe

a tendency towards fixity of character. While we cannot confidently affirm that at physical death the process of the formation of character ends and the soul eternally remains what at the moment of death it was, yet we have no more warrant for affirming that the will shall get an entirely new direction from that which it had already acquired. That there is any remedy more efficacious for the disease of sin than the sacrifice of Christ for man's salvation available in the hereafter, we have no right to assume; for the assumption involves a depreciation of the absolute value of the cross of Christ, in eternity as in time. When the personal decision for or against Christ has been made in the full and clear light of the Gospel, the words of Scripture are the last words which can wisely and rightly be spoken, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" But evangelism must beware lest it offend both con-

science and reason by insisting on the finality of this choice, without due recognition that there are many who depart this life morally and spiritually so undeveloped that it cannot be said of them that they have either attained moral fixity or even had the opportunity of distinctly and decisively accepting or rejecting the Christian salvation. Not only dwellers in heathen lands, but even denizens of our city slums must often be regarded as in this undeveloped condition. That there will be any advantage for them in the delay of their opportunity of moral change and spiritual choice we have no reason to believe. The urgency of the Scriptural command to preach the Gospel to all men here and now, should rather suggest to us that even for them it were better to pass in this life from darkness into God's marvellous light, and so impose on us the duty of bringing the Gospel within their reach, and them into



such a condition as will enable them to understand and welcome the truth as it is in Jesus. That sin will continue to be punished so long as it continues to exist, in this life or in the next, is a position from which no truth now known or fact discovered affords evangelicalism any sufficient reason for receding.

#### 8. THE ATTITUDE OF EVANGELICALISM ON THE QUESTION OF FUTURE DESTINY.

The revolt against the doctrine of eternal punishment was undoubtedly warranted by conscience as well as by affection; and it would be a hopeless enterprise were modern evangelicalism to make any attempt to restore that doctrine. As presented in the traditional orthodoxy it was often both a blasphemy against God and a libel on man. But on the other hand the alternative solu-

tions of the problem which are being offered for our acceptance—the final annihilation of the wicked or the final salvation of all men—are not less exposed to objection. The possibility of the extinction of personality is not easily conceived; while the possibility of a continuance in evil by some souls is one that cannot be confidently denied. It will be wise for evangelicalism not to commit itself to any of these solutions. What the ultimate issue of God's purpose of salvation for mankind will be, must, in humble and trustful submission to the love and wisdom and goodness of the Heavenly Father's will, be left as the secret counsel of the Most High. What the facts of human experience no less than the truths of the Holy Scriptures teach us, is that sin itself is the greatest wrong and injury that any man can inflict upon himself, that his sense of guilt is a true witness to the separation that sin involves from God and

all the higher, holier, and truer influences that fashion the soul in likeness to and fellowship with God, that penalty, not remote, but immediate, follows sin, in the deterioration wrought in a man's own moral and spiritual nature, that death gives no promise of change, and that as far as any foresight of the future is given to us sin, guilt, and punishment may continue in indissoluble union. Evangelicalism cannot be less severe and more tender than Jesus Christ was. He spoke of sin so seriously and solemnly, of judgment so confidently and impressively, of penitence so urgently and persuasively, that in *The Gospel for To-day* there must not be any laxity of thought or leniency of feeling in dealing with these dark and dread realities of human experience—sin, guilt, and death. <sup>1</sup>

### (3.) LOVE AND GRACE, SACRIFICE AND SALVATION.

#### I. THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

*The Gospel for To-day* may, and even must affirm sin, guilt, and death not with less but even more certainty and urgency than the traditional urgency. These facts remain, although our definitions and explanations of them from time to time vary. But evangelical theology, if it is to justify its name, must be able to bear witness to facts as indubitable as these, which provide deliverance from bondage and remedy for the disease in them disclosed. In the message of the cross of Christ as an atonement for sin, is to be found the Gospel which a sinful, guilty, and dying race needs. Dr. Denney in his last book has most impres-

sively shown the central position of the cross of Christ in the teaching of the New Testament; and no theology can claim to be evangelical which does not assign to the cross as deep a significance and as great a value as the New Testament does. But we must be very careful how we state the doctrine of the cross, lest on the one hand we obscure God's love and on the other debase man's faith. Any view of the sacrifice of Christ which offers us low thoughts of God or leads to mean feelings in man, must be at once and altogether rejected. It should be a common ground of all evangelical forms of thought in the present day, that the cross of Christ has its origin in, is a proof of, and brings home to the minds and hearts of men the infinite and eternal love of God as the Universal Father. It is a travesty of modern evangelicalism to represent it as teaching that the death of Christ brings about a change in the cha-

racter or disposition of God, appeases His wrath and secures His grace. There may be evangelical statements which, divorced from their context, lend some countenance to this caricature; but this is certain, that it is the duty of all who claim to be evangelical to begin their Gospel in the Gospels, to accept as fundamental the consciousness of Jesus Christ that God is the Father whose perfection lies in His eternal and infinite love, for the evil as well as the good, the unjust as well as the just, and to reject without hesitation every theory of the Atonement which is inconsistent with this truth. The error and wrong of the traditional orthodoxy is just this, that it has often co-ordinated the authority of prophets and apostles with that of the Son, that it has approached the cross through the prophetic anticipations and the apostolic interpretations instead of through the consciousness of the Crucified Himself.

But surely the work of Christ can be fully understood only through the mind and heart of Christ Himself. The witness of prophets and apostles is not valueless; nay, it is necessary to a complete statement of the doctrine of the cross; for there was much about His sacrifice that Jesus could not teach His disciples because they were not yet able to bear it, into the knowledge of which the Spirit of truth afterwards led them. Yet whatever contributions Christian theology may receive from other sources, the consciousness of Christ Himself regarding God must ever be its regulative principle. Accepting this principle, we are constrained to admit that there are elements in Paul's representation of the nature and purpose of God, in his controversy with Judaism and Judaistic Christianity, which must be regarded as survivals of his Pharisaism, but which are eliminated when his own Christian con-

sciousness finds expression, undisturbed or unobscured by any apologetic or polemic purpose. That God is by nature Love; that His relation to all mankind is that of Father—with this truth evangelicalism must begin, and go on, and end; and this must be the light of all its seeing.

## 2. THE HOLY LOVE OF GOD.

But it is not improbable that a greater peril threatens evangelicalism from an opposite direction. Great care must be exercised in stating the doctrine of God's love, and in drawing inferences from it. Sometimes God's love is represented as a good-nature which ignores moral distinctions and excludes moral purposes, which is inconsistent with truth, righteousness, holiness, perfection. That God loves all men does not mean that right and wrong are the



same for God, that He has as much pleasure in bad men as in good, that He does treat and will treat all men alike, whatever may be their character and conduct. Such misstatements of the truth cannot but breed moral confusion and bring religion into conflict with reason and conscience. In teaching the doctrine of God's Fatherhood it must always be made plain that God is not a neutral in the conflict between good and evil, that He loves righteousness and hates iniquity, and that the measure of His love and hate alike is His absolute perfection, that He is consuming fire unto all sin and that He can give no peace to the wicked. As the sun by the same heat fosters the growth of the living and hastens the decay of the dead, so the love of God as holy acts not contrary to, but in accord with the moral character and its necessary consequences. When there is non-adaptation to this environment of holy love, there

must be different results than when there is harmony. That this love of God involves by necessity of its nature condemnation of and opposition to sin, is fully and clearly shown in the mode of its approach to save and bless mankind. It comes in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that grace consummates its self-manifestation in the Sacrifice of the Cross.

### 3. THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN THE INCARNATION.

What are the beginnings of this grace of Christ in which the holy love of God as Father comes to mankind? "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich." What is the act of self-renunciation to which the apostle refers, is

more fully described in the words, "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men." This *kenosis*, self-improverishing, or self-emptying of the Son of God to become man, as soon as we try to formulate it in the language of metaphysics, as a speculative doctrine presents many intellectual difficulties; but Paul's references are for a very practical purpose—to stimulate humility and generosity by the example of Jesus Christ, not on His cross only but even in the Incarnation. This doctrine of the pre-existent glory of the Son of God with the Father, laid aside in order that He might become man, whatever difficulties it may present to the mind, may claim a place in *The Gospel for To-day* for two reasons. It conveys to our

hearts the assurance that the love of God in the grace of Jesus Christ did not begin in time, but belongs to the eternal nature of the Godhead. God is eternally and infinitely all that Jesus reveals Him to be. It proves that grace to be unto self-sacrifice, not only in the cross, but also in the whole life, from its very beginning to its very close. Christian theology has not magnified and glorified that grace as it should in its doctrine of the Person of Christ. It has too often sought to secure the real Divinity at the expense of the true humanity, and has been unwilling to accept even the testimony of the Gospels to the limitations to which the Son of God was subject in becoming man. In laying stress upon the full manhood of Jesus modern thought is not making less of His full Godhood, but is giving us a truer and better view of what God is; for in so far as the human limitations of the Incarnate Son are

denied, the self-sacrifice of the Incarnation is made to appear less than it was, and in so far as the Incarnation is robbed of the glory of self-sacrifice it becomes less fully an evidence of the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of the love of God, which passeth all knowledge. Modern evangelicalism should make sure that it has an adequate doctrine of the Person of Christ.

#### 4. THE VICARIOUS EXPERIENCE OF JESUS.

In the High Anglican school of theology the words "And the Word became Flesh" are sorely abused in order to lay stress on the physical aspects of the Incarnation, on which may be based what seems to me a grossly materialistic doctrine of the Sacraments. That Christ had a body seems to me to be a fact that has no significance and

value apart from the larger fact, of which it was a necessary part, that He was truly and fully a man. What is distinctive in man is not his physical organism, which has probably been developed from lower forms of life, but his mental, and moral, and spiritual nature. What in the Incarnation claims attention, then, is the consciousness and character of Jesus Christ. It is in His mind and heart and will that His grace in His Incarnation is displayed. When we study the life of Christ closely, one prominent feature that arrests our thoughts and commands our feelings is the vicariousness of His whole experience. It is not by any outward substitution by God, but by His own self-identification with the human race, that He takes man's place and becomes his representative. Otherwise it could not be. For love by its very nature and necessity is vicarious; it ever seeks to live the loved one's life, to think with his

mind and feel with his heart, to share his lot and bear his burden and wage his battle. There is profound wisdom in the American humourist's version of the Golden Rule, "Be the other fellow." The mother feels the shame of her son's drunkenness more than he does himself; the father's heart breaks before his daughter mourns her own fall from virtue. To the patriot his country's enslavement is his own dishonour; to the citizen the social ills of his time are a burden. The lower the personal development the narrower the range of sympathies; the greater the soul's growth the wider the life in and for others. The perfect personality is not exclusively individual, but comprehensively universal. As perfect man Jesus suffered in and for mankind as no other man has. Still more as the only-begotten and well-beloved Son of the Father, in whom the infinite and eternal love of God wrought in its stainless purity

and measureless intensity, could He so identify Himself with the race as to assume its entire experience of the sorrow and shame, darkness and doom of sin, as His own, save that He was never overcome by the racial sin and was never conscious of personal guilt. If the Old Testament revelation could rise to the height of the ideal of the righteous Servant of Jehovah (Is. liii.), who made His soul an offering for sin, how much more could this ideal become reality in the consciousness of the Son of God's love? It is only from the standpoint of an individualism from which we are happily escaping that vicarious sacrifice presents any difficulty.

#### 5. THE EXTENT OF THIS EXPERIENCE.

But we must ask ourselves, How far did this self-identification of Christ with the



human race go? We shall offend the modern conscience unless we are very careful in formulating our reply; for the sense of individual liberty and personal responsibility, one of the greatest gains of man's moral development, must be respected, as it has not been in some theories of the Atonement. We must beware of saying that Jesus was held guilty, for only the sinful can be guilty; nor should we even speak of His enduring punishment, for only the guilty can be punished; still less should we dare to say that He was exposed to God's wrath and curse, for the Son was the offering of the Father's love, and, if we may with all reverence say so, never dearer to the Father's heart than when He made His soul an offering for sin. But we may without any moral offence declare that Jesus was subject to all the adverse and grievous conditions of man's lot, which are due to sin, and that His more intense sen-

sibility and more extensive sympathy made Him share the misery and dishonour of human life in a larger measure and a higher degree than was possible to any other man. During the course of His ministry we may trace an ever fuller participation in the woe of man, until in the cross He so completely took on His own soul the burden and the shadow of a sinful, guilty, and dying race, that physical dissolution was accompanied by an agony and desolation of soul possible only to the Sinless and Perfect because He had in love lived Himself into entire oneness of grief and dread with mankind. It was by this vicarious love that He put Himself in the place of man and suffered on man's behalf. There is a certain moral order of the world which joins evils to sins as their necessary consequences; there is a solidarity of the race which subjects to these evils even those who have not deserved them as penalty; there is an affec-

tion of man for man which makes the guiltless voluntarily suffer with the guilty. Jesus, in becoming man through His perfect love, so raised that solidarity to an absolute sympathy that through it He was able, though innocent, to experience to the full the evils of man's life with the distinct consciousness that these evils were the punishment of man's sin. It is not in the terms of the law court that we are to express the doctrine of the Atonement; it is the language of living experience, and especially of the loving heart, that we must use. Only by the interpretation that life and love offer can we assign any tolerable significance to Paul's two sayings, otherwise hard to understand, that "Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf," and "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."

## 6. THE CROSS AS OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

This self-identification of Christ with the race was not a physical necessity, it was a moral choice. In the Wilderness at the beginning of His ministry He was tempted to prefer the path of self-advancement to the way of vicarious sacrifice. In the Garden at the close of His work He was again tempted to shrink back from the consummation of that process of vicarious sacrifice in the agony and desolation of the cross. But both temptations were resisted. In submitting without murmur and complaint; nay, in accepting the cross willingly and heartily, He not only realised His unity with mankind as the typical, representative, substitutionary Son of Man, but He also perfected His unity with God as the Son of God in His obedience to and confidence in His Father's will. He thus expressed

the mind and heart of God towards the moral order conjoining sin and death to which He submitted. His surrender as Son to the Father in His sacrifice set the seal of the Divine approval to this order. As it was in love both for God and for man that He thus suffered, His sacrifice declares that the moral order which attaches so serious consequences to sin is not inconsistent with but an expression of the holy love of God, for it reveals a necessity in the very heart of God that in the very act by which man's salvation is secured the condemnation of sin should be expressed in the most explicit and emphatic form possible. Can we conceive any clearer condemnation of sin than the Passion of the Son in obedience to the Father in order that He might save mankind from sin? If we remember that Jesus in Gethsemane prayed that if it were possible this cup should pass from Him, and thus confessed that the absolute

necessity of the cross was not at that moment distinctly perceived by Him, we shall humbly and reverently hesitate about asserting that we can give a logical demonstration of this necessity which shall leave no room for doubt or question. If we also remember that all hesitation was removed, and that recognising the necessity He submitted to it, we must obediently accept His decision that thus and only thus could the Son fulfil the Father's will for the saving of mankind. The prayer in Gethsemane seems to me to lift the reason for the death of Christ into the very life of God; it belongs to the relation of the Divine Father and the Divine Son; any theory of the Atonement which takes account only of the subjective effects of the cross on man appears from this standpoint inadequate; and we seem compelled to affirm that it was a necessity for the holy love of God in saving man from sin, not only to suffer with and

for him, but so to suffer that the moral order of the world, which expresses God's personal perfection, should be honoured and approved, and God's displeasure toward sin should be revealed in the same act as His goodwill toward "mankind sinners."

#### 7. THE EFFECTS OF THE CROSS.

If we must affirm this objective cause for the cross in the very nature of God Himself, we must also recognise its subjective effects in the experience of mankind. By what mental, moral, and spiritual process in man does Christ Crucified save from sin, guilt, and doom? It is not by changing God—for the cross expresses the infinite and eternal holy love of God—but by changing man, that salvation is realised. The subjective effects of the cross seem to

be threefold. (a) First of all God *convinces* men of His love in thus suffering with and for them, and thus assures them of His willingness to welcome them to fellowship with Himself as soon as they have abandoned their estrangement from Him. Jesus Christ during His earthly life drew even the fallen and the outcast to Himself by His grace; He assured them that He, and not His Pharisaic critics and opponents, was revealing the mind and heart of God towards them even in their sinfulness; He thus conveyed to them the assurance of pardon from and peace with God. In His death He still more manifested His love; and it was by His sacrifice that He won the hearts of His disciples as by His words and deeds He had not so perfectly done. But in life and death alike He bore witness that it was the love of God which in Him was drawing near to save and bless mankind. If He be but man His death is a



pathetic martyrdom, hard to reconcile with the care and rule of a Heavenly Father. Only if He be confessed the Son who alone reveals the Father, does His cross become the most convincing proof given to man of God's love. In the history of the Christian Church evidences abound of this subjective effect of the cross. Souls buffeted and baffled by doubts and fears have found rest and joy in God's love at Calvary. (b) Secondly, in the cross God *convicts* men of their sinfulness by showing them not only the penalties in which they involve themselves, but also the painful and grievous consequences of sin for Him who, Himself sinless, as God's manifested and communicated love, would save them from it, and by discovering to them the real character of sin through this knowledge of its results. The heinousness and hatefulness of sin is presented in the cross in a double way. First, the Crucifixion as a crime shows how

far human unbelief and hate and cruelty can go in their opposition to truth and love and righteousness. At Calvary a man may detect in himself the seeds of evil passions the ripened fruit of which is seen in the murderers of the Holy One and the Just. Next, the Crucifixion as a sacrifice shows how severe and serious are God's condemnation of sin and His antagonism to sin, when only by thus suffering with and for man was it possible for God's own Son to be the Saviour of mankind. At Calvary a man learns to measure his guilt not by what he himself has suffered, but by the agony and desolation of Christ Himself. The cross has made the human conscience much more sensitive about sin; for it allows man to know and share in God's thoughts and ways regarding it, which are as high above man's own thoughts and ways as the heavens are above the earth. (c) Thirdly, in the cross, by the greatness of the love

which He there exhibits by thus voluntarily suffering for men, and by the greatness of the evil which He there exposes in the mode of His sacrifice, God *constrains* men to return gratitude for His generosity, faith for His grace, and surrender for His sacrifice. He thus brings to human life a new motive, stronger and surer than any that had before been experienced by man. The love of God in the cross of Christ constrains men to abandon sin and to commit themselves to God. God's Saviourhood inspires a devotion and loyalty which His Creatorship and Kingship could not compel or command. Reason and conscience are often overborne by passions; but this new affection can cast out these old passions. The argument of reason and the authority of conscience are reinforced by the love which God's sacrifice awakens. Trust in God takes the place of doubt and fear of God; hate of sin replaces delight in it; love for

God becomes a mightier motive than love of self or the world. Such a change in man is wrought by Christ Crucified. Such are the subjective effects of the cross. This change is not accomplished through these effects without the consciousness and volition of man. It is through human faith that the grace of God in the cross of Christ works; and modern evangelicalism needs a doctrine of faith which shall correspond with its doctrine of grace. In the next section an attempt will be made to indicate such a doctrine; but in closing this section one consideration, which is either ignored or denied by many, must be insisted on. It is this. Acknowledging fully, as I do, that there are depths of truth and grace in the Atonement on its Godward side which our minds and hearts cannot fathom, yet we must maintain that on its manward side the Atonement must be made intelligible if it is to be credible. The action of the cross

is not miraculous or magical, but spiritual—that is, within the consciousness and volition of the believer; and therefore its worth will depend on its meaning for us. A distinct and adequate conception of what Christ Crucified does in and for us is necessary if the subjective effects of the cross are to be fully experienced by us. Not a little of the poverty of life one meets with in some evangelical circles is due to narrowness and meanness of thought about the cross. Not only for the sake of true thought, but also for the sake of worthy life, must *The Gospel for To-day* seek to give as correct and sufficient a doctrine as is possible of God's Love and Grace, Sacrifice and Salvation.

#### (4.) FAITH, LIFE, AND WORK.

##### I. REASONS FOR THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

There must be a human welcome for the Divine approach and a human response to the Divine appeal in the cross. Evangelicalism, if it is to be true to its history, must maintain that all God wants and all man can offer is faith. There are two reasons why the doctrine of justification by faith alone should be maintained as strenuously and confidently now as it was at the time of the Reformation. (a) *Firstly*, evangelicalism should seek to laud and magnify the freedom and the fulness of the grace of God. To conceive that God makes a bargain with man, that He requires a certain amount of merit on the part of man

before He will forgive, is to do dishonour to His love, the reason for and the motive of which is in His own infinite and eternal perfection as Father. Man cannot earn or deserve God's grace in the slightest degree; God gives from the unstinted and ungrudging generosity of His heart; and all He asks is man's willingness to take the gift He offers. (b) *Secondly*, evangelicism should set itself against every form of Pharisaism, however subtle and disguised it may be. To assign any worth to man's penitence for sin, intention to do right, confidence in God's goodness, promise of amendment, as if all these or any of these were part of the purchase-price of His salvation, is to encourage self-conceit and self-sufficiency, to foster the error that man can partly save himself and that God has but to complete what man has commenced. The testimony of Christian experience is most distinct and emphatic on

this point, that in the most saintly lives there has been the fullest and clearest realisation of the twin truths for which the doctrine of justification by faith alone stands, that God's grace is absolute, not conditioned by man's worth, but solely by God's goodwill towards man, and that man cannot save himself, that he has no plea of merit and no claim for reward that he can present unto God as a reason why God should forgive. To make men think less of God's grace and more of their own worth, is assuredly not the way to secure a thorough moral reformation and a true spiritual revival; but to lead them to cast themselves utterly, in their unworthiness, on God's grace, is the one condition of their becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus.



## 2. THE ADEQUATE CONCEPTION OF FAITH.

While faith is insisted on as the sole condition of salvation, it must be maintained that the conception of faith current in popular revivalism is utterly inadequate; and its insufficiency and impotence is probably the reason for much of the latent antagonism of many serious and earnest men to evangelicalism. The faith which is witnessed in connection with some evangelistic movements does not energise in love, does not show itself in works, is barren, and bears no fruit in moral virtues and spiritual graces. It brings relief from the fear of hell, and comfort by the hope of heaven, to the person exercising it; but by it he is not crucified with Christ unto sin and the world, and he is not raised with Christ in newness of spirit to live unto God. But faith is no ignorant, indifferent,

and indolent assent to a plan of salvation, no mere acceptance of the benefits of a transaction between God and Christ on man's behalf in the remote past. It is the reception by the whole human personality of the whole Divine communication in the cross; and only in the measure in which this faith is exercised is the Christian salvation received. There is in the cross the whole Divine nature in the human consciousness of the Crucified—truth, love, holiness; and faith receives the grace of God unto salvation in mind and heart and will. There is apprehension of truth, appreciation of love, appropriation of holiness. To separate, as has sometimes been done, the assent of the mind from the confidence of the heart and the consent of the will, as the primary essence of faith, of which the others are only secondary effects, is to substitute orthodoxy for piety and to sacrifice piety to orthodoxy. The old

rough-and-ready division of men into saved and unsaved is far too simple and easy for the complexity of human experience and character. It would be more correct to say that in every man the saved and the unsaved humanity are found in combination, compromise, or conflict. That man is fully saved who so welcomes God's grace in the cross of Christ that he is so *convinced* of His forgiving love to him as to allow no sense of estrangement to disturb his child-like communion with the Father, that he is so *convicted* of his own sinfulness and evil desert as to condemn himself with the same kind, if not degree of antagonism as the cross exhibits on the part of God, that he is so *constrained* by gratitude to God that he no longer reckons himself to be his own, but only and always His who has bought him with the infinite price of His own precious blood. By faith a man submits himself to the Divine environment, exercising

those functions which ever keep him in vital contact with it. There is nothing unreasonable or immoral in the exercise of faith in the Christian life. Just as the seed grows and bears fruit if it is placed in favourable conditions of soil, sunshine, and shower, so by faith in God's grace a man places himself in the conditions which are favourable to the proper development of his personality. We must recognise that there are degrees of faith as there stages of growth. How little faith will save a man from hell and make him sure of heaven, is a question which seems to have a very practical interest for many men. But if we recognise that a man has just as much of hell in him as there is sin still cleaving to him, and just as much of heaven as he has gained of good, we shall insist that he can have no more and no less of the Christian salvation than is measured by the faith in God's grace which he exercises.

### 3. THE OBJECT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

The character of faith depends on its contents, its quality or its object; and we shall therefore better understand what faith is if we consider that to which it is directed. Man's faith receives God's grace. That is so general a statement as to be ambiguous and vague; it needs definition and limitation. It is not doing injustice to the traditional orthodoxy to say that it was so anxious to give the *rationale* of the Atonement its due prominence and proper influence that it tended to make the plan of salvation the object of saving faith. The characteristic of modern evangelicalism, on the contrary, is to turn attention to and fix interest on the Saving Person. Faith can then be described as personal submission to the personal influence of Jesus Christ. Not His teaching and example only, but

His sacrifice and Spirit also, are the channels through which this influence is exerted. Faith is, therefore, not only learning of and following Him; it is also trusting in His grace and salvation and yielding to His continued presence and power. It is fellowship with the living Christ, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, yea, and for ever," and who therefore makes real and operative here and now for the believer both the grace of His humiliation and the glory of His exaltation. That faith may possess its full vitality and vigour, it is necessary to insist on the truth, which has happily in recent years claimed the attention of many Christian thinkers, namely, that Jesus Christ lives, and that He is no distant, indifferent, and indolent spectator of the Church's work and warfare, but that He is a present, interested, and potent actor in every Christian experience. It cannot be doubted that Christ Himself is dwelling

and working in the spiritual development of many a Christian man who is by no means fully conscious of His personal presence and activity. To some men, the reality and sincerity of whose faith it would be false and wrong to doubt even for a moment, this "fellowship with the living Christ" seems too mystical an experience for them to understand or even to desire. They seem to conceive the influence of the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ to be of the same kind as, if much greater in degree than, the influence of a Socrates or a Paul. The sacrifice of Christ appears to them an event of the past of such significance and value to God as to be the ground for their present forgiveness. The presence and power of Jesus now is to them indistinguishable from the immanent activity of God in the souls of men. Without pronouncing any unfavourable judgment on this type of Christian experience, I must

confess my own conviction that Christian faith is greatly invigorated and energised if not only the possibility is recognised but the reality is experienced of communion with Christ as living and present and active here and now. Four considerations may be advanced why evangelicalism should maintain that faith has its object in a Saving Person, and should define faith as personal submission to a personal influence. *Firstly*, personal influence is the strongest spiritual force; and it is reasonable to believe that Christ exercises that force permanently and universally, and that He was not limited in His exercise of it to a few men for a few years. *Secondly*, the authority of the teaching and example of Jesus is lessened if He too shared the common lot of death, and increased if He conquered death and His words and works are still a revelation of the Living to the living. *Thirdly*, if God did reveal Himself in the



Person of Jesus Christ, is it not probable that He still continues to reveal God, if not in an outward history, yet in an inward experience, and is it not improbable that He who has such significance and value for the race as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, should now be silent and inactive? *Fourthly*, Jesus promised His continued presence and power to His disciples, and the New Testament bears testimony that the promise was fulfilled—a testimony so frequent and emphatic that it may be said with confidence that the Christianity which knows not the living Christ bears no resemblance to the faith and life of the Apostolic Age. If faith be this union with Christ through confidence in and submission to Him, it is evident how full of promise and of potency it is. To live in Christ is to live like Christ; and Christian faith has thus the assurance of final sanctification as well as immediate justification.

#### 4. FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST AND THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT *as life*

In this connection it seems necessary to refer to a religious movement which has the admirable intention of supplementing the differences and correcting the defects of the current evangelicalism, and which has done splendid service in raising the ideal of Christian life for many men, and in elevating their practice. The movement for the deepening of the spiritual life which is specially associated with Keswick, is, it seems to me, however, open to criticism on two points. *Firstly*, it seems to me an error to distinguish the life in the Spirit from the life of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. There may be a more or less clear consciousness of the presence of the Spirit, a more or less full possession of the power of the Spirit, in the individual ex-

perience; but wherever the grace of Christ is received by faith, there the Spirit is and works. What has to be insisted on is that fully to believe in Jesus as Saviour is to be fully possessed by the Spirit of God. *Secondly*, it appears to me to be a mistake also so to insist on the realisation of the personality of the Spirit, on the consciousness of His presence and power; as it is in the Spirit that Christ lives and works. Not to reveal Himself, but Christ, is the Spirit's function; and His work is most fully accomplished where Christ in His grace and glory is most clearly known, most dearly loved, and most loyally obeyed. The indwelling and inworking of the Holy Spirit is indistinguishable from fellowship with the living Christ. To bid men trust Christ more fully, yield themselves more unreservedly to His influence, is, it seems to me, more definite and practical counsel than to bid them experience

the baptism of the Spirit; for the personality and the character and the commands of Christ have a moral and spiritual distinctness which for most men the operations of the Spirit have not, and men are more liable to identify their own impulses with the inspirations of the Spirit than with the influence of Christ, to which His teaching and example have given a more definite content. Without denying that it is sometimes needful to lay stress on the teaching of the New Testament about the work of the Spirit, I cannot but think that evangelicism will render greater service by fixing attention on the aspect of the Christian life that it is fellowship with the living Christ.

##### 5. FAITH AS CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST.

But even this description of the Christian life needs closer definition. While we know

that Christ here and now lives and works; while we believe that He is now exalted in the glory that He had with the Father from the beginning, yet the mode of His existence and His operation is now hidden from us. We cannot conceive the eternal Christ otherwise than as the historical Jesus. It is to the Gospels we must go to gain a definite image of what He now is. We know that the temporal and local limitations are removed, that the conditions of humiliation have been changed into the conditions of exaltation; but the person, character, and work we know to be the same. We must not indulge in any vain or foolish imaginations of what His beauty or splendour now is; but should think of Him as essentially being in heaven what He in word and deed, life and death, revealed Himself on earth. To the Apostle Paul, who lived in communion with the Risen Christ, the facts of the earthly life

were of inexhaustible spiritual significance. It was by means of these that he conceived the Person whose presence and power he was experiencing. If he tells us that he no longer lives, but Christ liveth in him, and that to him to live is Christ, he defines that experience for us by declaring that he has been crucified with Christ and that he has been raised with Christ. The Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ are the two great facts of the earthly life of Jesus which for him determine the distinctive character of the Christian life. The teaching and example of Jesus may explain, confirm, enforce the truth taught by these facts; but the essential aspects of the life which results from faith in God's grace are presented here. It is a separation, final and complete, from sin; it is a dedication, absolute and eternal, unto God. If what is characteristic of the Christian life is the spiritual reproduction of the Crucifixion

and Resurrection of Jesus, then it becomes of utmost moment and supreme importance that we should understand what death and rising-again meant to Christ Himself. If we are to re-live His experience by assuming His attitude to sin and judgment, goodness and God, then the doctrine of the Atonement must not be left an unsolved problem, a baffling enigma, a sacred mystery, but we must learn to think with His mind, and feel with His heart, and choose with His will in His Sacrifice and Triumph. Faith is thus a common life with Christ; and the more He lives in us by the communication of His Sacrifice and Spirit, and the more we live in Him by submission to His presence and influence, the more fully have we made our own the complete Christian salvation.

## 6. HOLINESS AS THE FRUIT OF FAITH.

The state of salvation is manifested in the process of sanctification; for a Christ-like life is the surest test and clearest proof of a life in Christ by faith in His grace. The characteristic feature of Christ's life was self-sacrifice, a giving of Himself freely, without stint or measure, to serve and suffer for and save mankind. The saved life, therefore, is the sacrificial life; for Jesus Himself has taught that a life can be saved only as it is lost. It is His sacrifice which inspires ours; and it is in the completeness of our sacrifice that the efficacy of His sacrifice in us is shown. No doctrine of the cross can be true or right which releases men from the practice of the cross. The view of the cross which the present age needs is that in which the Sacrifice of Christ is so conceived as the manifestation and



the communication of the holy love of God as to condemn and execute in men all self-love and to inspire and sustain self-sacrifice. The present age demands, and rightly, an ethical and social Gospel; and it is not too little religion that has made some men turn with disappointment, and even disgust, from popular revivalism. But if the Christian salvation is conceived as has been indicated, as the deliverance of man by the action of God in the cross from self-love to self-sacrifice, then we can not lay a surer and stronger foundation for a solid and symmetrical structure of Christian ethics, in which social obligations will find their due and full recognition. Christian doctrine is often brought into contempt by Christian practice; but ■ Gospel which leads the disciple, like the Master, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life, if not as a ransom, yet for the good of many, approves

itself by the fruit it bears as Divine; for surely the truth of the doctrine is proved by the worth of the practice which it inspires, and the man who lives the cross in service, sympathy, sacrifice, is the truest and best preacher of the cross.

#### 7. CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN FAITH.

This principle of a sacrificial life, of which the cross of Christ is the motive and the pattern, needs to be explicated and applied in a moral code. Hitherto the subject of Christian ethics has not received the attention from evangelicalism that it deserves. Too often has the advocacy of Christian ethics been left to those who accept Christ's teaching and example without fully recognising that it is by His sacrifice we are saved and by His Spirit sanctified. But

Christian ethics includes much more than the words of Jesus about duty, or even the works of Jesus done in love and righteousness; it includes the moral value and efficacy of His agony and passion. In the constraining love of Christ there is given the greatest and strongest moral motive; and in communion with Him there is enjoyed the fullest and mightiest moral power. He who is not seeking salvation by works, but is being saved by faith, is pledged to, and capable of, a righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. The life in Christ not only makes in a man moral demands which the life under law dare not, but the former is capable of fulfilling those demands as the latter is not. The recognition of the moral claim and power in the cross of Christ imposes on evangelicalism an obligation even as it offers an opportunity. On the one hand there is the multitude of moral

difficulties and necessities summarily described as the social problem; on the other there is this moral principle given in the Gospel of God's grace. If there were an adequate recognition of all that is involved in evangelical ethics, and an effective application to all social relations, it can be said with confidence that the Christian churches would be able to make a contribution of inestimable value to the cause of human progress. There is a great work needing to be done, and there is a great power that can do it; an urgent demand of the hour is that the power shall be brought to the work. But we must have knowledge as well as zeal. Not a little well-intentioned effort miscarries because it is ill-directed. We must on the one hand have a close and thorough study of the social problem in all its vastness and variety; we must on the other have a keen and clear discernment of what the Christian ideal of social pro-

gress as well as individual perfection is. I believe that for both alike an indispensable qualification is to have seen evil and good, sin and righteousness, man and God in the light of the Cross with eyes that have been cleansed by tears of penitence and anointed with the salve of God's forgiveness. If evangelicalism must believe, unless it prove apostate, that at Calvary God deals with man's sin and evil as in no other historical event, then that sacred spot alone is the standpoint from which the Christian's duty to the world's misery must be viewed.

#### 8. THE OPPORTUNITY AND OBLIGATION OF EVANGELICALISM.

I have endeavoured in the preceding discussion to indicate what, in my judgment, evangelicalism must teach if it is to arrest

the attention and secure the allegiance of the modern mind. Certain forms of expression, and even modes of thought, have become antiquated, and have lost their significance and value. But the essential elements of evangelicalism are not subject to any temporal or local limitations, but can find mental and verbal expression in the current conceptions and phraseology of each land and age. One proof of the universal and permanent destiny of the Gospel is its versatility and adaptability. These characteristics Christianity possesses as no other religion does. They who cling through prejudice or bigotry to phrases and ideas that have become archaisms and solecisms, are not true to the genius of the Christian religion; but they who are ever willing to look at the old faith, which is ever young, in new light, are truly living in the liberty of the Spirit, and not in the bondage of the letter. Why should evan-

gelicalism so often be traditional and conventional, instead of being original and liberal? I do not know any faith that can be so free and bold as the faith which has Christ as its object; for in Him there is infinite possibility and eternal promise. It is a duty, which it would be distrust and cowardice to decline, that all who have that faith should be ever willing and ready to commend it as intelligible and credible in every phase of thought and mode of feeling through which men in their spiritual development may pass. In attempting thus sympathetically to enter into the opinions and sentiments of others, that through us Christ's truth and grace may reach them, we are not abating our loyalty or abandoning our service to Him; but in seeking to present Him in a light in which they may more clearly behold Him, we ourselves shall gain fresh and bright visions of His grace and glory. As this discussion pro-

fesses to be nothing more than a personal confession, I may without offence, in closing, bear my own testimony that, although in my study and my service I have passed through many phases of thought and modes of feeling, in living not my own life only, but in seeking to re-live the life of others, so as to understand and help them, yet Christ has not changed, and His cross has not become less, but more, for my faith.

“That one face, far from vanish, rather grows,  
Or decomposes but to recompose,  
Becomes my universe that feels and knows!”



### III. THE RELATIONS OF THE EVANGELICAL BASIS OF OUR CHURCH LIFE TO SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

#### I. THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

This title makes three assumptions: (1) that the basis of our Church life is *evangelical*; (2) that there are *social questions* clamouring for an answer; (3) that there is a *relation* between this evangelical basis and these social questions. Each of these assumptions must be briefly justified.

##### I. THE EVANGELICAL BASIS.

There can be no doubt that there is a common impression among those who do

not know our Church life from within, that the basis of Congregationalism is the shifting sand of individual opinion, that we have no definite principle binding us together except the principle of having none, that because we have no formal creed therefore we have no common faith. Even within our own borders there may be some to whom the attraction of Congregationalism is that it leaves to every man the right of private judgment, and who are Congregationalists that they may think and say whatever they please. In view of this misunderstanding of our position from within and without, it is worth while laying stress on the fact that, as the title rightly assumes, Congregationalism has an *evangelical* basis. Our common faith as Congregational churches is no vague, theistic idealism and optimism which occasionally, for the sake of appearances, pays Jesus the compliment of mentioning His name as a teacher and

example, or of referring to His Spirit as an influence; but it is an acceptance of and submission to Him as Saviour and Lord, by whose sacrifice we have been saved from sin and death, and through whose Spirit as His personal presence and power in us we are being sanctified and made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Each Congregational church, as a fellowship of believers, consists of men and women whose sin has been forgiven, and who are living in Christ as children of God, as saints, as heirs of life eternal. The witness which it bears to the world is the Gospel of the grace of God in His Son, crucified, risen, and ascended. It offers the worship of gratitude to the God of all grace, the Father of all mercies, who in Christ Jesus is reconciling the world unto Himself. The work which it does is to seek that through it Jesus may save the lost, to nourish and to train in all its members "the life which

is hid with Christ in God," to further every righteous and good cause among men as embraced in the Kingdom of God, of which the Son is Founder, and, as the Mediator with the Father, Head. We utter no theological shibboleths; we forge no ecclesiastical fetters; but we do with united heart and voice declare that there is given no other name in which is salvation save the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

## 2. THE SOCIAL QUESTIONS.

Since the interest and attention of the nation have been withdrawn from a war in a land far off, it may be hoped that the wishes and thoughts and feelings of men will again be turned to the wrongs and miseries which are to be found at our very doors. How many are the *social questions* which are clamouring for an answer! The

revolution in the methods and resources of industry and commerce which took place last century, has disturbed the social organism in many of its vital functions. On every side there is a need of adjustment of social standards, sentiments, and arrangements, to the new economic conditions. The depopulation of the country and the congestion of people in towns, with many disastrous consequences for health and morals; the division of labour and use of machinery, which make much work a mechanical monotony, and rob it of its stimulating variety; the distribution of wealth, which allows a corrupting luxury and indulgence to the rich and forces a destructive squalor and misery on the poor; the separation of classes, which leads to a supercilious selfishness in the one class, and a rebellious selfishness in the other, which strains to breaking-point the bond of a common citizenship, and even of a common

profession of religion;—these are some of the problems which are demanding a solution. Their extent and complexity cannot be indicated in a few words. Only those who have thrown themselves heart and soul into social movements, can realise the time and thought, toil and trial, which must be given to dealing with even one of the least of all these questions. Politics, economics, ethics, all are involved. Only by extensive legislative change and energetic municipal action can the question of the housing of the people be grappled with. The encouragement of handicrafts will not abolish the use of machinery; and shorter hours of labour will not counteract the dehumanising effect on the worker of the modern methods of industry, without the provision of the means of culture for the profitable and refining employment of the ampler leisure. Trades Unions and Masters' Combinations cannot secure for us any final

settlement of the question of the just share in the results of the common enterprise of capital and labour which each may claim. All that they can do for us is to reach a compromise of the apparently conflicting interests. A little slumming by the rich and a few garden parties for the poor will not bridge the yawning gulf between the classes and the masses. As these economic conditions of society have their consequents in wrongs and vices and crimes, it is evident how great a demand on all that is truest and best, most pitiful and kind in the Churches, these social questions are making.

### 3. THE RELATION BETWEEN THESE.

Such is the *evangelical basis* of our Church life, and such are the *social questions* of to-day; but the title of this essay

which assumes that there is a *relation* between them, must seem to some people a contradiction in terms. For are there not on the one hand the fervent evangelists, who think that the saving of souls by the preaching of the plan of salvation is the only work worth doing, and care less than nothing for the rights or wrongs of men as members of society? And are there not on the other hand the ardent socialists, who have come to think of the Gospel as "a mean dodge" to make people content with the evils of the present in view of the blessings of the hereafter, and the Church a mere sham as regards its social influence, even when it is not a real hindrance to the social advancement of the down-trodden and the outcast? Who can venture to deny that these two extremes—an unsympathetic evangelism and an irreverent socialism—afford an excuse each for the existence of the other? It may, however, be gladly



and thankfully acknowledged that evangelicalism is becoming more alive and alert to the social duty which roots in and grows out of Christian faith, and that socialism is less aggressively anti-Christian, for there are many for whom social reform is a religion, who, if still estranged from the Christian Churches, yet find in Jesus a Brother and Leader. This mutual approach is not nearly as close as it must needs become if the Christian Churches are to fulfil their function in the social movement. On the one hand it must be made much more evident to all our Churches that the Gospel means not only individual gain but also social good, that faith in Christ must *energise* in love to man, that the ends and the means of the Christian salvation involve the removal from human society of all conditions which are adverse to good and godly living, and the advancement of all causes which are favourable to righteousness and

holiness, by an unmeasured devotion and an unstinted effort for the welfare of others. On the other hand it must be more thoroughly proved to all social reformers that all the problems are essentially and fundamentally moral and religious, that amelioration of conditions cannot be permanently and perfectly secured without improvement of character, that in the Gospel of the grace of God there is a message which can impress and influence men as no socialistic propaganda can, and that in the Church of Christ there is an agency for good too valuable to be cast aside. We must now consider *the moral and religious issues involved in our social questions.*

## II. THE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

In laying stress on these issues there are political and economic aspects of social pro-

blems. It is very desirable that as workers and citizens we should make ourselves familiar with all the points of view from which the phenomena of human society can be studied, so that in our industrial or our civic action we may express an enlightened intelligence as well as a benevolent intention; for ignorance and indiscretion may do nearly as much harm as indifference or even self-interest. It is very necessary that we should know the other aspects of our social problems if we are to form wise and just judgments on their moral and religious issues. But it will be generally agreed that as Christian Churches what we are primarily concerned with is the relation of the conditions of society to human character and destiny. Most of us whose lot it is to preach, would probably do ourselves little credit, and bestow on our hearers still less profit, if we attempted to make our pulpits economical or political platforms;

but it is to betray our trust and to neglect our task if we do not bear our testimony and wield our influence on behalf of the social movements in so far as they affect morality and religion.

#### I. EFFECTS OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

If we consider the *effects* of our social conditions on character, it will be impossible for us to maintain that we can be indifferent to these social questions. The housing of the poor has much to do with the squalor and misery in which they live. Where men and women and children live huddled together like beasts, there can be little decency, modesty, or chastity. A crowded house is not likely to be a comfortable home, which will counteract the attractions of the public-house or the street. The monotony of many employ-

ments wearies the mind without exercising it, and leaves a craving for sensation and excitement which seeks gratification in strong drink, or gambling and betting, or the low-class music-hall. Small wages do not allow the nourishment of the body which is necessary to physical efficiency; and the need of the stimulation which intoxicating liquor affords, is the more keenly felt and the more readily indulged where the waste of money is the greater wrong and injury. The growing estrangement of the classes, due to their social separation, is hurtful not only to the poor, whom it makes discontented, suspicious, and resentful, but even to the rich, in whom it encourages heartlessness and carelessness. There can be no doubt that much of the sin which abounds is due to social conditions.

## 2. MOTIVES OF SOCIAL ACTION.

But these conditions are in turn the results of personal actions, the *motives* of which must necessarily be subject to moral judgment. How far poverty is the cause or the effect of vice and crime is far too complex a problem for summary solution here. But it cannot be doubted that in some measure at least impurity, intemperance, dishonesty, and improvidence contribute to the degradation in which so many live. But it is not desirable or profitable for us to dwell on the faults of the poor, as, unhappily, few are found within our Churches to whom the warning need be addressed. Far more to the purpose is it for us to recognise the faults of the well-to-do and the wealthy. How extensive and potent factors in our social dangers and difficulties are greed of gold, pride of rank,

and lust of power! In the struggles of capital and labour the men are not the only selfish combatants, and the masters are not altogether philanthropists, who resist larger wages and shorter hours solely in the public interest. When one sees how enormous are the fortunes made by some of our captains of industry, what luxury and display they can indulge in, how vast are the inheritances which they leave to their families, often proving more of a bane than a boon, one cannot persuade oneself that labour has been amply rewarded, and that capital is simply receiving the recognition which its merits and its services deserve. Is it possible to ignore the responsibility of the landed gentry and aristocracy for the depopulation of the country and the congestion of people in the towns? Men have been driven from many a hamlet in Scotland to make room for sheep and deer. Land in our cities cannot be got for build-

ing purposes, or only at such cost as to make house rent the heaviest burden of the poor, because the owners put their own gain before the public good. How widespread and deep-seated is the indifference among those who are comfortable in this world to the want and woe which are all around them! The subscriptions, often grudgingly or ostentatiously given, to charitable and philanthropic societies, are not and cannot be a substitute for the personal interest and service which every man owes to his neighbour. The existence and the continuance of many social evils are due to moral defects, and are a proof of a moral rottenness in the state of our society.

### 3. THE CHURCH'S PROPHETIC MISSION.

The Christian Churches cannot be indifferent or indolent regarding the moral



effects or causes of our social condition. The Christian ministry stands not only in *an apostolic succession of grace*, but also in *a prophetic succession of righteousness*. It must not only show and offer the Divine remedy of salvation, but it must also diagnose and expose the human disease of sin. Grace does not and cannot supersede, but fulfils righteousness. The Gospel cannot have any tolerance for or make any compromise with oppression, injustice, or cruelty. It must probe the festering sore before it can apply the healing balm. Still the Baptist who preaches repentance must be the herald of the Christ who offers the Kingdom. Hence our social questions involve a religious as well as a moral issue; for religion cannot be divorced from morality. If in our industrial or civic conditions moral injury is being done; if in our social action any moral wrong is perpetrated, then for

the ministers and members of the Christian Church it is a binding duty to discover, to denounce, and, so far as possible, to remedy and remove the evils; for the God of all grace is also the God who hates all iniquity, and gives no peace to the wicked, and whose "grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Nay, it seems to be specially necessary at the present moment that the social movements be deepened and strengthened by the testimony and influence of the Christian Churches; for among many earnest and devoted social reformers there is an unconscious Materialism, they incline to lay all stress on economic and physical conditions, and to ignore almost altogether the personal factor. Vice and crime are treated as altogether the result of squalid and miserable circumstances. More stress is laid on cleaner houses than on purer lives. Indus-

trial changes and civic reforms are advocated with an enthusiasm and energy which are not displayed in insisting on moral reformation and religious revival. Nor are those social reformers altogether to blame. The Churches generally have in their corporate testimony and influence held so much aloof from social movements, that outsiders might with good reason be led to believe that by their silence and inactivity they were confessing that in the Gospel there was no remedy for social disease. These social questions will bulk ever more largely in the public eye; and if the Churches of Christ cannot show that in their *evangelical basis* they have the foundation on which alone a stable and solid social structure can be reared, they will inevitably and deservedly sink in reputation, fail in influence, and fall into contempt. But that need not be. The Gospel can and will redeem the social organism as well as the individual soul.

### III. THE EVANGELICAL SOLUTION.

The Christian salvation, both in the *ends* it attempts and the *means* it employs, contains in itself the potent factors of a social redemption. What does the Gospel offer individual souls? It declares that by the sacrifice and the Spirit of the Son of God sinners are saved to be sons of God, saints, and heirs of heaven. It affirms that the worst slaves of evil can be made the best servants of the good. How hopeful is the spirit in which the Gospel is addressed to the outcast and the fallen! How lofty is the aim which is set before those who give heed to its call! How costly the means by which the salvation it offers has been won!

## I. THE ADDRESS OF THE GOSPEL.

An inspiration to social effort is afforded by the fact that the Gospel addresses itself to *sinners*. Jesus was the friend of publicans and sinners; as the Good Physician He sought to heal those who were most in need of cure; by faith in Him a sinful woman was lifted out of the depths of shame to the heights of devotion. As long as we believe in the Gospel we have no right to doubt or deny the possibility of the uplifting of those who are most deeply sunk in evil and misery. Is not much of the acquiescence in existing conditions due to a pagan fatalism that he who is filthy must continue filthy still and that he who is drunken must continue drunken still, due to a non-Christian despair of the sufficiency and the efficacy of the means of renewal within our reach in the grace of God? We

do mock God if we preach the Gospel and do nothing to remove the conditions which are adverse to its intelligent and efficient acceptance; but we do also mock God if while improving the circumstances we neglect to bring within the reach of men the heavenly power by which alone they can be so transformed as to benefit fully by their changed circumstances. The conviction that men are sinners, and not only wronged and unfortunate, needs to become more than hitherto a motive in all social effort; but also the certainty that Christ saveth sinners must be allowed to deliver us from the despondency and despair which the greatness of the need, the slowness of the results, and the feebleness of our endeavour engender, and to inspire us with the enthusiasm and the energy which will not faint or fail, but will continue steadfast and unmovable through the burden and the heat of the long day of labour.

## 2. THE AIM OF THE GOSPEL.

There is, too, an inspiration in the ideal which the Gospel presents. Sinners are to become *sons of God, saints, heirs of heaven*. Is not one of the great perils of our social movements too limited an outlook, too low an aim? God forbid that we should characterise efforts to improve the physical condition of any human beings in the terms which Carlyle has allowed himself, as moving pigs into a cleaner sty, or securing greater abundance of hog-wash. Bodily need and discomfort and pain deserve pity and demand relief. But while these things are done, the weightier matters must not be left undone. If we realise the dignity to which even the lowest is called in Christ, we shall recognise the duty which is laid upon us. To make men sons of God means immeasurably more than to

make them respectable members of human society; to make them saints is something infinitely greater than to make them law-abiding and useful citizens; to make them heirs of heaven demands very much more devoted effort than to make them owners of some of the goods of earth. But, as the greater includes the less, this Christian ideal which we set before us will make us, not more indifferent and indolent, but more enthusiastic and energetic, in securing and maintaining those human conditions in which the Divine life can be nourished, fostered, and developed. A son of God has a claim to an earthly home in which he may learn more of what the Heavenly Fatherhood is; a saint should enjoy the rights of citizenship, through the exercise of which he may develop his character; an heir of heaven need not await all his good things hereafter, but should find in the beauty and wonder of this world a fore-



taste to fit him for the full enjoyment of the glory and the blessedness of the world to come. To think of and to treat man as the Gospel does, is to invest him with the claim and right to live the highest human life possible.

### 3. THE METHOD OF THE GOSPEL.

It is the *method of the Christian salvation* which, fully and fairly applied, will bring us nearest to the solution of our social problems. It is involved in the evangelical basis of our Church life that we preach *Christ Crucified* as the power and wisdom of God unto salvation. The cross must ever have a foremost place in evangelicalism; but it must be the cross adequately interpreted, as it is in the Gospel of Paul. The older evangelicalism, which is the popular evangelicalism still, pre-

sented the cross to sinners as the means of their escape from the punishment of sin. The newer evangelicalism, which I believe to be much more Scriptural, and much more faithful to the testimony of Christian experience, must present the cross as the spirit of life, by which the power of sin is broken and the love of sin is quenched. In other words, Christ's death for us must not be separated from Christ's life in us. His sacrifice is completed in His Spirit. Only as a man is crucified with Christ has Christ been crucified for him. The sacrificial principle of the cross must become the method and the motive of his life in Christ if the benefit of the sacrifice of Christ is to be personally appropriated by him. For deliverance from the penalty of sin would be an injury to man without deliverance from the power and the love of sin. If the sacrificial principle be the characteristic of the life in Christ, it must be

applied to the solution of our social problems.

(a) THE SACRIFICIAL PRINCIPLE IN  
CHRIST.

We must first of all see how this sacrificial principle was evident and active in the experience of Christ, which is typical and normative for all Christian experience. The first expression of it was in the *sympathy* of Jesus. He did not live unto Himself, but He lived in the life of others. The Incarnation itself is the supreme manifestation of the participation of the Divine in the human; and throughout the life of the Son of God there is vicarious sorrow, struggle, suffering. He bore man's burden, waged man's battle, and even endured the grief and the shame of man's sins, although Himself sinless. He who has not

experienced, and cannot conceive or imagine, the sympathy which is self-identification with others, has failed to catch a gleam of the glory of Jesus. This sympathy was not inactive, for it was ever *energising* in service. He comforted the sorrow He felt with others, He relieved the need He knew in others, He loosened the burden which He bore with others. "The Son of Man," because "the Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief," "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." This service was not limited by self-pleasing or self-sparing, but was throughout sacrificial. Not only on the cross did He "give His life a ransom for many." There His sacrifice culminated. He submitted Himself to agony and desolation, darkness and death, for those whom, though He was God's Son, He was not "ashamed to call His brethren."

(b) THE SACRIFICIAL PRINCIPLE IN  
CHRISTIANS.

This sacrificial principle must find in Christians expression and exercise as in Christ. There must be *sympathy*. One half of the world does not know how the other half lives. We must acquaint ourselves with the lot of the poor, until their want and woe become a part of our own life, until we feel so much with and for them that we cannot be altogether glad ourselves so long as they are so miserable. We also must become men of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Every effort to make known the miseries and needs of others is to be commended, as only thus can we come to share the sympathy of Jesus. But we must beware lest sympathy degenerate into a vain sentiment, into a wasted sensation. We must recognise as we hitherto

have not adequately done the claim for *service* which comes to us. Every talent, every resource, every opportunity is ours, that we may not look on our own things, but also on the things of others. Wealth is called to serve poverty, learning ignorance, purity degradation, joy misery. This service is no patronage of others, no favour to others, for which we have a right to expect servile gratitude; it is simply the finding of our life in God through losing it in the world. To become a convincing evidence of the "life hid with Christ in God" this service must be perfected in *sacrifice*. We lightly, glibly use that term; but do we truly know what it means for us? Have we in any adequate sense known the "fellowship of Christ's sufferings?" Have we been "made conformable to His death?" The cross, which is our help and our hope, is also our law and judgment; for if in relation to the social questions

which to-day are so numerous, varied, urgent, persistent, we "have not the spirit of Christ," this sacrificial principle, "we are none of His." May we all who look to the Crucified for salvation, follow Him in "the holy way of the cross," in loving sympathy, lowly service, and living sacrifice, unto "the full redemption of His purchased possession," a perfected humanity, which shall be to the praise and glory of the love, mercy, and grace of the Father through the Son in the Spirit.

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